

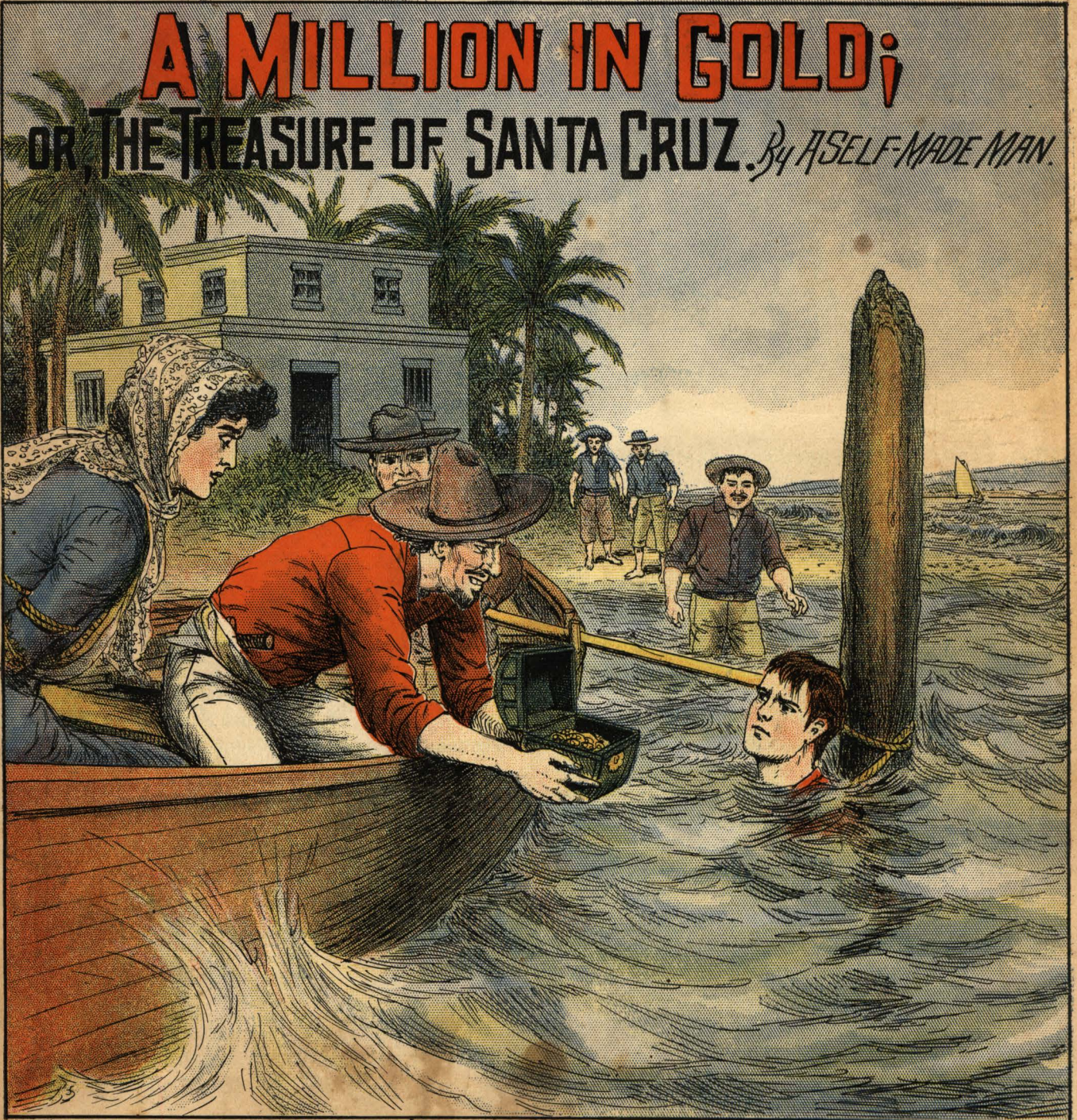
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# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

### A MILLION IN GOLD; OR, THE TREASURE OF SANTA CRUZ. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"Will the young senor take his last look at the sparklers?" grinned the Mexican, malevolently, holding the jewel box tantalizingly toward Tom. Bound firmly to the post, the fast rising tide laving his shoulders, the boy met Mercades's despairing gaze.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# A MILLION IN GOLD

OR,

## THE TREASURE OF SANTA CRUZ

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

#### IN WHICH THE CURTAIN RISES ON SCENE I.

"Hello, Jennie! You're lookin' like a daisy this mornin'," said Moses Gilpin, with a grin. "Goin' to give me a kiss, ain't you?"

Jennie Dean, the prettiest girl, by long odds, in Cobalt village, edged away from the speaker—a coarse, freckled-faced boy, who had burst suddenly from the bushes by the roadside and confronted her.

She flashed a look of mingled displeasure and apprehension at the newcomer, and it was easy to see that she rather objected to his companionship.

"What's the matter with you? Ain't I as good as Tom Danvers?" continued Moses, advancing on her as she retreated, while a disagreeable look came over his sallow face.

"I wish you wouldn't bother be, Moses Gilpin!" said the girl.

"Don't you like me?" he asked, in a menacing kind of way.

"No, I don't! So there!"

That was plain English, and straight from the shoulder.

"Why don't you?" snarled the boy.

"Because I don't!"

"I s'pose you think there ain't no one like that beggar, Tom Danvers," sneered Moses.

"He's a gentleman, and you're not," she retorted frankly.

"Oh, he is?" with a malicious chuckle. "He's a gentleman, is he? A fellow whose brother is an escaped jail-bird!"

"Aren't you ashamed to say such a thing!" cried the girl indignantly.

"No, I ain't, 'cause it's the truth. He was arrested for stealin', and put in the lock-up. If he hadn't broke out and run away, he'd have been sent to the State prison, where he ought to go!"

"I don't believe he was guilty," replied Jennie.

"It don't make no difference whether you believe it or not. Everybody else in the village does. My old man seen him comin' down the Squire's lane at two in the mornin'. If he'd only known as much as he did afterward, he'd have stopped him and found the goods on him. But that didn't matter much anyway, as he was caught diggin' the stuff up next night. He's a thief, and that's all there is to it."

"You're a mean, contemptible thing!" exclaimed Jennie.

"You say that 'cause your sister was goin' to marry him. Now she can't. He'll never dare show his nose in Cobalt again, and I'm glad of it, for I never liked him, no more'n I do his brother Tom."

"If I told Tom what you've said about his brother he'd make you smart!"

"Yah! He wouldn't dare. My old man would fix him if he laid a hand on me. I'd just as lief as not tell Tom Danvers to his face that his brother is a thief, for that's what he is."



"You're a liar, Moses Gilpin!" cried a voice close at hand, and Tom Danvers, a stalwart, good-looking boy of seventeen, with brown curly hair and a frank, honest expression of countenance, sprang from the same line of bushes and confronted Gilpin with clenched fist and a menacing look. "My brother is not a thief, and I've half a mind to cram the words down your throat!"

Moses jumped back a couple of feet and looked scared.

"You'd better not touch me if you know when you're well off!" he snarled, darting a venomous glance at the last arrival.

"Then don't you dare call my brother a thief, for I won't stand for it!"

"If he isn't a thief, what is he?" snorted young Gilpin. "Wasn't he snatched baldheaded diggin' the stolen stuff up at the foot of a tree in the Parson's orchard? If that ain't proof, I'd like to know what is," concluded Moses, triumphantly, as if he felt that his argument was indisputable.

"I'm not going to argue the matter with you, Moses. The whole thing was a mistake, and time will show it."

"Yes, it will," replied Moses, sarcastically. "Who do you suppose believes that cock-and-bull story of his that he saw a tough-looking tramp bury the stuff, and he started to dig it up in order to return it to the Squire?"

"It's the truth, whether anybody believes it or not," replied Tom stoutly.

"I believe it, Tom," spoke up Jennie, earnestly, "and so does Agnes and mother."

"Thank you for saying that, Jennie," said Tom Danvers, flashing a grateful glance at the girl. "I didn't expect anything else of you, and of Agnes and your mother. Jack will prove his innocence some day, and he will never forget those who stuck by him in his trouble."

A sneer curled the mouth of Moses as he listened to Tom's words, but he did not dare to express his feelings openly.

He hated the fugitive Jack Danvers because the young man had given him a whipping for cruelly maltreating a poor dog; and he hated Tom Danvers because Tom was the most popular boy in Cobalt and attracted all the girls, especially Jennie Dean, for whom Moses had a sneaking liking himself.

Since Jack Danvers had been arrested on the charge of breaking into Squire Penrose's house one night when the family was away at a wedding in a neighboring town, and had subsequently escaped from the village lock-up and disappeared, Tom had been the sole support of his widowed mother.

But it seemed as if misfortune never came singly, but in shoals, for Tom, who, up to that time, had been attending school in the next town, riding to and from the academy each day, found it almost impossible to get anything to do when he found himself obliged to put his shoulder to the wheel.

On top of that, the bank in the next town, where Mrs. Danvers had a deposit of several hundred dollars, failed

about that time, and Tom and his mother were reduced to great straits to make ends meet.

The Deans, mother and two daughters, were warm friends of the Danvers.

Agnes Dean carried on a millinery and dressmaking business in the village, and was the main support of the family.

She and Jack Danvers, at the time of his arrest, were engaged to be married.

Although the bright young fellow, who was an expert carpenter, had fled the village under a cloud, Agnes did not break the engagement.

She firmly believed in his innocence, and determined to remain true to him.

Jennie Dean assisted her mother to keep house and her sister in her business.

She was a bright, vivacious girl, and a great favorite with the boys.

Tom thought the world of her, and she had a very high opinion of him.

Moses Gilpin was her particular aversion.

She didn't like him even a little bit, though he was always trying to make himself solid with her.

He was the only son of John Gilpin, the village auctioneer, church deacon, and general man of importance.

Mr. Gilpin was reputed to be well off, though he and his family didn't put on any style, being close-fisted to a degree, making a dollar go as far as it was possible to stretch it.

Mr. Gilpin owned the cottage where the Danvers lived, and he was always most punctual in calling for his rent.

Mrs. Danvers paid eight dollars a month, and even that sum she was unable to raise when the landlord put in an appearance on the last day of the preceding month, for she did not pay in advance.

As the Danvers had lived many years in the cottage, Mr. Gilpin felt obliged to give the widow time, though he did so much against the grain; and he told her he would call again on the fifteenth, when he intimated that he expected her to have the rent.

She didn't have it when the middle of the month came around, and then Mr. Gilpin suggested that if she couldn't pay regularly he'd prefer she'd leave.

She appealed to his sympathy, but as that was an unknown quantity, matters now around the last of the month looked very black for the Danvers.

Although they were now poor, and the taint of a crime rested on the head of the elder son, they were proud, and suffered in silence rather than make an effort to borrow money and chance a refusal.

"You are returning to the village, aren't you, Jennie?" said Tom, after thanking her for standing up for his brother.

"Yes."

"Then I'll go along with you, if you don't mind."

"I shall be glad if you will," she answered.

So they walked on, leaving Moses Gilpin standing by himself in the middle of the road.



"Yah!" muttered Moses. "I wish you were out of the village, Tom Danvers, like your thief of a brother. Maybe you'll have to go soon, for my old man says your mother is behind in her rent, and don't seem to have nothin' but her furniture left. I hope he'll turn you out in the street. Then you'd take your stuck-up face somewhere else. After you're gone, p'raps Jennie would listen to me, then. She wouldn't have you at her elbow to fall back on. Ugh! How I hate you!"

Thus speaking, Moses left the road, re-entered the bushes and disappeared.

## CHAPTER II.

### TOM RESENTS AN INSULT.

When Tom Danvers reached home, an hour later, he found his mother in great distress.

"You've been crying, mother," he said. "What's the matter?"

"Mr. Gilpin has been here again for his rent, Tom."

"What if he has? We're not going to cheat him out of it. We'll pay him as soon as we get the money."

"Heaven alone knows where or when we'll get it, my son," replied Mrs. Danvers, tearfully. "At any rate, Mr. Gilpin says he won't wait any longer."

"He won't, eh?"

"No. He says we must move right away."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes. Where can we go? We have no money with which to rent another cottage, even if I knew of one in the village suitable to our circumstances that was to rent. Besides, Mr. Gilpin says he'll have to levy on our furniture to pay himself for the two months' rent we owe. He's been looking around the house, and declares that all we have wouldn't fetch twenty-five dollars at auction."

"The old villain!" cried Tom. "What right has he to buldoze you? He hasn't any right to touch a piece of our furniture—it's against the law. If we had a cow or horse, he might attach it, but he can't levy on our furniture. He has made a big bluff because he wanted to frighten you. Maybe he thought you had a little money in a stocking somewhere, and he could make you show it up. After all the years we've paid him rent he ought to be ashamed of himself to push you because we happen to have been hit by a streak of hard luck."

"I'm afraid he's a hard man, Tom."

"I'm sure he is—and his son Moses is just like him. I had a run-in with Moses on the county road a while ago."

"What do you mean?" asked his mother, apprehensively.

"I was making a short cut through Farmer Wood's field, after trying without success to get a job on his place, and when I came to the fence alongside the road he was talking to Jennie Dean. I heard him call brother Jack a thief, so I just jumped out on him and called him down for it."

"Poor Jack!" said Mrs. Danvers, the tears welling up in her eyes. "If I only knew where he is now!"

"He's safe, at any rate. That's one satisfaction," replied

Tom. "As he couldn't get a square deal in the village he went where he could."

"Why doesn't he write to us and tell us where he is?"

"Perhaps he's afraid, mother."

"He might write anyway, and let us know that he is well."

"I have no doubt he will, mother, after a while."

"But we may have to leave the village, and then he'd lose track of us."

"I may have to leave the village, mother, but you won't have to. If worst comes to worst, you can go and live with the Deans. They'll stand by you, don't you fret."

"They are very good and kind to us in our troubles, Tom, and I shall never forget them; but they're not any too well off, and I wouldn't think of imposing myself on their generosity."

"Ho! I guess you could help them enough to pay for your board if we have to break up."

"But I don't want to break up, Tom, and lose you. You are the only boy I have left to cheer me, now that Jack is a wanderer," said Mrs. Danvers, beginning to cry again.

"I don't want to leave you, mother, but I can't find anything to do in the village. It's up to me to get out and hustle somewhere else. I'm going to Brentville in the morning to see if I can get a place in a store there."

"Well, Tom, perhaps that is the right thing for you to do. As soon as you get work I'll move to a small house there."

"All right, mother, and then the postmaster would know where to send any letters that might come for us. By the way, that reminds me that I got a letter at the post office for you."

"A letter!" exclaimed the little widow joyfully. "From Jack?"

"No, mother, not from Jack, or I shouldn't have forgotten I had it about me."

Mrs. Danvers' face fell.

She was greatly disappointed.

"Who is it from?"

"I don't know. The handwriting is strange to me. You'll have to open it to find out," and Tom produced the letter and handed it to his mother.

She looked at the address and shook her head.

"I can't imagine who it can be from."

"That's easy to discover. All you have to do is to open the envelope, and then you'll know."

So Mrs. Danvers opened the letter, out of which an enclosure fell to the floor, which Tom picked up and held in his hand without looking at it, and glanced at the signature.

"Harley Roberts," she said in a mystified way. "I never heard of the man before."

"The letter is surely for you, isn't it, mother?" said Tom.

"Yes. There seems to be no doubt of that."

"Read it, then, and see what he says."



Mrs. Danvers did so.  
This is how it ran:

MRS. FREDERICK DANVERS.

DEAR MADAM: Six years ago I borrowed \$100 from your late husband, which I promised to return as soon as I could. He had faith in me, and trusted me without even a note of hand. Not until now have I been in a position to pay that money. My circumstances having changed for the better, I take great pleasure in sending you the sum in question, trusting that you have not at any time been in need of the money, which was a god-send to me at the time I received it from your husband. I deeply regret that so good a man is no longer in the land of the living, and I wish you to understand how grateful I have been to him for the accommodation, which I now turn over to you who are most entitled to it.

Respectfully yours,

HARLEY ROBERTS.

"Dear me! I knew nothing about this!" said Mrs. Danvers. "But I don't see any money in the letter."

"Perhaps this is it, mother," said Tom, holding up the enclosure. "Yes, it's a money order—two of them—for \$50 each!"

"How fortunate!" exclaimed the little woman. "It couldn't have come at a more fortunate moment."

At that juncture there came a knock, a sort of authoritative one, on the door.

Tom went to the door and opened it.

On the step outside stood John Gilpin.

He walked in without waiting for an invitation.

"Hem!" he said, clearing his throat, and not deigning to notice Tom. "I have rented this house to Mr. Dusenberry, Mrs. Danvers. He is willing to take the furniture off your hands at a fair valuation, leaving the appraisal to me as a licensed auctioneer. I should be glad if you can make it convenient to move to-morrow or the next day, as Mr. Dusenberry wishes immediate possession."

"Well, I must say you have an awful nerve, Mr. Gilpin," said Tom, wrathfully. "Who told you that we were going to give up this cottage?"

"Tut! tut! young man! Remember whom you are addressing," replied the auctioneer, pompously.

"Oh, I'm addressing you, all right. What business have you to rent this place over our heads to Mr. Dusenberry, or anyone else?"

"How dare you use such language to me, you young whippersnapper?" sputtered Mr. Gilpin.

"Tom! Tom!" interjected Mrs. Danvers, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Mrs. Danvers, I did not expect to be insulted when I entered your house. After all I've done for you, this is a poor return for my generosity."

"What have you done for my mother?" demanded Tom, angrily. Given her a month's time in which to pay a paltry eight dollars rent. Haven't we paid you regularly

for the last ten years? Do you suppose for a moment that we intended to cheat you out of your due? You can go right back to Mr. Dusenberry and tell him that we propose to stay here as long as we choose and can pay our rent."

"You young scamp!" exclaimed Mr. Gilpin, turning furiously on the boy. "You're as bad as that thief of a brother of yours!"

Biff!

The auctioneer went down on the floor from a blow straight from Tom's shoulder, while the angry lad stood over him with heaving chest and flashing eye.

"Oh, Tom! Tom! what have you done?" cried his distressed mother.

"What have I done, mother? Resented an insult from the lips of a cur!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ENCOUNTER BEHIND THE HEDGE.

Mr. Gilpin lay for several moments quite dazed.

The blow had been a hard one, and it took all of the conceit out of him for the time being.

Then he scrambled to his feet livid with rage.

"You young viper!" he roared. "I'll have the law on you for this! You'll spend the night in the lock-up as sure as my name is John Gilpin! As for you, Mrs. Danvers, I order you to move out of this house at once, bag and baggage. Don't expect any further consideration from me. Blame your son, madam. He, like his—brother, will bring your gray hair with sorrow to the grave. He's an ingrate—an ingrate, madam, and shall pay dearly for striking me!"

With those words, jerked out of his mouth, he grabbed up his hat and left the cottage, slamming the door after him.

"Oh, Tom! See what you have done!" grieved Mrs. Danvers.

"I'm sorry, mother, but I couldn't help it, if I was to be hanged for it. Jack is my brother. He is not a thief. No man shall say he is in my hearing without catching it hot from me."

"Oh, my boy, you will be arrested and locked up. You have broken the law! What shall we do?"

"I'll never give that rascal the satisfaction of having me arrested."

"How can you save yourself?"

"By leaving the village at once. I intended to do so anyway in the morning. A few hours earlier can make little difference with me."

"But the constable will follow you to Brentwood and arrest you there."

"If he can find me, but I'll take care that he won't. You have the two money orders, mother. They represent one hundred dollars, and that will keep you for a while, at any rate until you hear from me. I'll drop in at the Deans' and tell them what has happened, and ask them to look out for you. I know they will be glad to do so."

"My dear son, must I lose you, too? Must you, also,



become a fugitive from the village—to return only on the pain of arrest?”

“Well, mother, I suppose I could remain, and get off with a fine; but our funds are too limited for that sacrifice. I can return any time that I can afford to pay the fine. At least, I’ve had the satisfaction of resenting an insult to my brother from a man for whom I have no respect.”

Tom went to his room, filled his suit case with such apparel as he needed, and then, kissing his mother good-bye, left the house.

He went directly to the home of the Deans, told them about the trouble he had got into through his loyalty to his brother, and said that to avoid arrest he was going to leave Cobalt right away.

They were sorry to learn that matters were so serious, and Jennie was particularly depressed by the news.

Mrs. Dean promised to bring his mother to their home and see that she wanted for nothing so long as circumstances rendered it necessary for her to depend upon their hospitality.

Tom told Mrs. Dean that his mother had just received \$100 from an unexpected source, and this, together with the money he expected to remit to her from time to time, would enable her to pay her way, and be independent of the world.

Jennie accompanied him to the door.

“Good-bye, Jennie,” he said, taking her hand in his. “I’ll write to you, and I hope you’ll answer my letters, if only to let me know that you haven’t forgotten me.”

“I’ll never forget you, Tom,” she replied, with quivering lips. “I am so sorry that you have to go.”

“I’m sorry myself that I have to leave mother and you. Otherwise, I’d just as soon go as not, for I’m anxious to make a start in the world, and I don’t think I ever could do that in this village.”

“How long do you expect to stay away?” she asked him.

“I haven’t the least idea, Jennie. It may be a good while. It will all depend on my luck.”

He took a ring off his finger and handed it to her.

“There’s a keepsake for you. I hope I shall find it on your hand when I come back.”

“Thank you, Tom. Whenever I look at it I’ll think of you.”

“If Moses Gilpin takes advantage of my absence to annoy you, I’ll do him up in first-class shape when I come back. You can tell him so from me.”

Then they clasped each other’s hand and parted, Tom making a bee-line for the county road leading to Brentwood.

Before he reached it he encountered Moses Gilpin on his way home.

That youth favored him with a deep scowl.

“I’m sorry I met him,” muttered Tom. “When he learns that the constable wants me he’ll put him on my track. Well, it can’t be helped now.”

Night came down upon him by the time he was half way to the neighboring town.

Soon afterward he heard the sound of wheels on the road behind, and fearing that it might be the constable in pursuit, he took to the fields, pausing in the shadow of the hedge to allow the vehicle to pass by.

He knew Constable Black well, and recognizing him as the man who was driving the light wagon, he easily guessed that he was the cause of the officer’s presence on the road.

As a matter of fact, he was right.

Mr. Gilpin had sworn out a complaint against Tom before the justice of the peace, and a warrant had been given to the constable to serve.

He had first gone to the cottage, thinking he would find him there, but was disappointed.

Mrs. Danvers would give him no information regarding her son’s whereabouts, and the constable went away, with the intention of returning after supper.

While eating the meal Moses came to his house and told him that Tom had left town, taking the road to Brentwood.

Accordingly the officer hitched up his team and started in pursuit.

Tom was about to resume his walk along the highway as soon as the wagon disappeared in the distance, when he was grabbed by an arm and pulled back.

“Hello, sonny! Who were yer hidin’ from—the man in the waggin?” said a voice at his elbow.

Tom turned and confronted a hard-looking man in a disreputable outfit.

He had closely cropped hair, an unshaven chin, and a leering countenance.

On the whole, he was not a desirable acquaintance.

“Runnin’ away from home, I s’pose,” grinned the man, when the boy did not answer.

“What’s that to you?” answered Tom, aggressively.

“Nothin’, except I’d like to see what yer got in yer bag.”

“That’s your game, is it?” replied the boy. “Well, I don’t propose to be robbed without making a fight for it!” dropping his suit case and doubling up his fists, ready for action.

The fellow laughed derisively.

“Yer a spunky chap, derved if yer ain’t; but it won’t go, fer there are two of us. Show yerself, Jim!”

Jim came forth from the bushes.

He was a fair-sized youth, miserably clad, but his face, though tanned and sunken, was not a bad one.

He had a hopeless look on his features, as if the fact that he was alive was a matter of continual protest.

Tom looked at him, and mentally figured that one blow would put the forlorn-looking youth out of business.

“Yer see,” said the man, “yer don’t stand no show a’gin’ us. We don’t want to clean yer out. Jest open yer bag an’ if we see anythin’ that we specially fancy we’ll borry it off yer, to be returned with thanks when we git wealthy.”

“Sorry to disoblige you,” replied Tom, sarcastically,



"but I'm not making any loans at present. I want all I've got, as I'm strapped for money, and can't afford to lay in a new stock at present."

"Are yer really strapped?" asked the man, in a tone of disappointment. "Yer don't look like a boy as was hard up."

"Looks are not always to be depended on. Good-night!"

"Hold on! It's so long since we wuz in perlite society that we don't like to part with a well-dressed young gent like you. Jim, where's yer manners? Why don't yer take him by the arm and tell him how glad yer are to make his acquaintance?"

Jim, however, made no effort to avail himself of this kind invitation.

Whereupon the man uttered an imprecation and made a pass at his companion's head.

Jim dodged in a weary kind of way, as if he was accustomed to that sort of thing.

"Are you goin' to let this chap get away from us?" growled the unshaven individual, reaching out one arm to detain Tom as he moved off.

Jim's only reply was to put his hands in his pockets and lean up against the fence.

He made no attempt to head Tom off as he sprang over the rails and took to the road once more.

Tom, as he walked off, heard the man berating his companion in round terms for refusing to assist in the hold-up; then he dismissed the strangely assorted pair from his mind and headed once more for Brentwood.

#### CHAPTER IV.

TOM IS HIRED BY DR. QUACKENBUSH.

Tom reached the outskirts of Brentwood an hour later.

He kept his weather eye lifting lest he run foul of Constable Black as he entered the town.

To avoid the possibility of such a misfortune he turned aside from the main street and tramped across some vacant ground.

Drawn up in the center of one of the lots was a large covered wagon.

Through the folds of the canvas back Tom saw a light burning inside.

Through the top a small stovepipe projected, and from this smoke was issuing.

A pair of horses denuded of their harness was tied to one of the forward wheels, and the animals were eating their supper out of bags tied around their heads.

When Tom came abreast of the outfit he stopped to read a big painted sign attached to the side of the wagon, announcing some of the virtues of the "Great Kickapoo Throat and Lung Medicine, Warranted to cure Coughs, Colds, and similar afflictions inside of three days," and consumption after the internal application of the contents of six dollar bottles for \$5.

While he was standing there a tall, smoothly shaven man, dressed in black, came out of the vehicle.

He had sharp, piercing black eyes, that missed nothing

in their eagle-like sweep, and naturally he spied the boy with the suit case.

With an eye to extracting half a dollar, or even a modest quarter, from the pockets of the lad, he approached Tom and said:

"Better buy a bottle of the Great Kickapoo Remedy, young man," he said, in a seductive way. "You may not want it now, but it will be handy to have on hand when you catch a cold, which you're liable to do at any moment. It will cure a cold in the head inside of three hours, an ordinary cough in twelve hours, catarrh in——"

"I don't think I need any, sir. I haven't the price, anyway."

"Haven't the price?" exclaimed the man. "Why, I can let you have a small trial bottle for a quarter."

"I'm short of quarters."

"Two dimes and a nickel, or five nickels, will answer just as well."

"Can't afford it, sir. I'm practically strapped."

"Strapped! You don't look it," replied the man, surveying him with some curiosity and perhaps interest. "Live around here?"

"I've been living in Cobalt. That's the next village down the road."

"Don't you live there now?"

"No. I've come to Brentwood to hunt up a job."

"Hunt up a job, eh? What do you expect to turn your hand to?"

"I hope to get a position in a store."

"Ever worked in a store?"

"No."

"On a farm, perhaps?"

"No, sir. Haven't worked at anything yet."

"Going to school, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You aren't running away from home, are you?"

"Oh, no. The Brentwood Savings Bank failed three months ago, and mother lost all her money; that's why I've got to get out and hustle. As there isn't anything for me to do in Cobalt, I've come on to Brentwood."

"How would you like to see the world, young man?"

"I'd like it first rate if I could afford the luxury."

"Well, you can afford it, I guess, if you will travel with me."

"Travel with you?" exclaimed Tom, in some astonishment.

The man nodded briskly.

"I want an assistant, and I want him right away. The young man I had took sick with congestion of the lungs——"

"Congestion of the lungs! I thought your medicine——"

"My medicine would have cured him, but he wouldn't take it. So I had to send him to a hospital, and my business suffers in consequence. I can't attend to everything and sell my famous remedy, too, without serious inconvenience. If you'll hire your services to me, and agree to stick for six months at least, I'll pay you \$6 per week



and find you. That is, you'll sleep and eat in the wagon along with me. Can you cook at all?"

"A little," replied Tom, wondering whether it wouldn't be a good idea to take up with this offer, for he didn't expect to get more than three or four dollars a week at first in a store, while the idea of going from town to town, and State to State, rather appealed to him.

"Well, what do you say?" asked the man in black.

"What will I have to do?"

"You'll have to do all my errands; look after the horses, feed, water, and occasionally clean them; help make, bottle and label the mixture; help get the meals, and attend to such other duties as will fall in your way."

"Will I get the six dollars every week?" asked Tom.

"You will. You can send five of it to your mother regularly. You'll want the other dollar to spend."

"Which way are you traveling?"

"Straight out West and Southwest. You'll get a look in at all the prominent mining camps on our route. This is the chance of your life to see the country."

"I'll try it for a week, and if I'm satisfied to continue I'll agree to stay with you for six months, or longer, if you want me to."

"That's business. I shall want you to sign a paper to that effect."

"I'll do it after a week's trial."

"Very well. My name is Dr. Quackenbush. What's yours?"

"Tom Danvers."

"Danvers! That sounds familiar. About six weeks ago I met a young man named Danvers. He was about twenty-two, and said his first name was Jack, I think."

"Where did you meet him?" asked Tom eagerly. "That must have been my brother!"

"Your brother, eh? I ran across him in Peoria. He told me that he had just come from Buffalo, and was bound for the gold-fields."

"He must have gone to Buffalo, then, after he left our village."

"Didn't you know that he had gone there?"

"No. Mother and I didn't know where he went. We haven't heard from him since he left Cobalt."

"Then he left home sudden like, eh?"

"Yes."

"I remarked that he was a fine-looking young chap. So he's your brother?"

"I am sure it must have been my brother you met. Did he say what gold-fields he was going to?"

"I asked him the question, but he wouldn't tell me; that is, he said that he hadn't made up his mind where he would fetch up at."

"What is the most likely one he would aim for, do you think?"

"Goldfield, I should imagine."

"Are you going there, too?"

"I expect to."

"Then I might meet my brother?" said Tom eagerly.

"You'll stand a good show of doing so if he is there."

If Tom had had any objections to accepting the job, the chance it offered of throwing him in his brother's way would have settled the matter any way.

Then the disquieting thought occurred to him—was the outfit going to Cobalt?

If it was, he would surely be caught by Constable Black.

He could avoid that probably by refusing to accompany the wagon to the village, meeting the doctor at some place beyond.

To find out if he was going to be up against this difficulty, he asked his employer if he expected to pass through Cobalt.

"We'll start for there in the morning, as I am through with this place," replied Dr. Quackenbush.

"And you expect to do business there?"

"Certainly."

"Then I can't go with you."

"Why not?" asked the doctor, sharply. "Don't want your friends to know that you're connected with the medicine business, is that it?"

"It isn't that exactly," replied Tom, hesitatingly.

"What's the reason, then?"

Tom concluded that the best way was to tell Dr. Quackenbush the truth, and he did so, explaining that one of the most important men in the village had insulted his absent brother, and he had knocked him down for it; consequently, the constable was on the lookout to arrest him.

"That's it, eh?" said the doctor, after Tom had finished his story. "Well, then, I'll skip Cobalt, as far as doing business is concerned, and go straight on to Athens. I'll drive the wagon from here to a point beyond the village, and you can remain inside out of sight. You'll find lots to do to keep you busy. I've got a couple gross of bottles that will have to be washed, filled with the remedy, and labelled."

"That will suit me, sir. I don't care, as long as I'm not spotted on the wagon. I don't intend to go to the lock-up if I can help myself."

"Put your case into the wagon. The bunk on the left-hand side is yours. Did you walk here from Cobalt?"

"Yes."

"Had your supper?"

"No, sir."

"Then I guess you must be hungry. Jump inside and cook a mess of bacon and eggs, if you know how to do it."

"I can do that," replied Tom promptly.

"You'll find several slices of bacon on a plate, and the eggs are in a box on a shelf in a closet at the foot of my bunk. There is bread and butter on the table, and there's coffee enough for you in the pot on the stove. You'll have to stir the fire up a bit and put more coal on. When you're through you can wash up the dishes and put them away in the closet."

"All right, sir," replied Tom, springing up the short ladder into the wagon, for he had suddenly become aware



of the fact that his stomach was making strenuous demands that only a square meal would satisfy.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN WHICH TOM DOES UP CONSTABLE BLACK.

After placing his suit case beside his bunk, which consisted of a narrow mattress covered with bedclothes, on top of a kind of locker, he looked around the interior of the wagon.

A narrow, oblong table, with flaps that could be raised to extend its size, stood in the middle of the wagon.

A cup and saucer and several plates, on which were the remains of a meal, were spread out on it.

There was a small cooking stove clamped at the rear end of the vehicle.

A red glow shone through the grate.

There were a dozen boxes piled in the forward part of the wagon, which Tom subsequently ascertained contained empty bottles of different sizes.

A tier of shelves running along each side, above the bunks, were filled with shallow boxes, some of which contained the Kickapoo Remedy, ready for sale.

There were two closets, one at the foot of each bunk.

One contained a modest display of cups, saucers, dishes, etc., with knives and forks and spoons, while beneath was a space used as a receptacle for food.

The other, Tom afterward found out, contained a supply of the ingredients used in the concoction of the remedy, and the various graduated glasses and other paraphernalia employed in manufacturing the mixture.

Tom lost no time getting his supper, and though he was only an indifferent cook, he thoroughly relished the bacon and eggs, and left not a morsel on his plate.

He ate up all the bread and butter in sight and finished the coffee.

Behind the stove he found a dishpan, and from a fair-sized keg, with a faucet in it, he drew enough water to serve his purpose, after heating it on the stove.

Dr. Quackenbush was absent an hour, and when he returned Tom had everything tidied up, much to the man's satisfaction.

"You'll find a pair of horse blankets on the seat in front," he said to Tom. "Get them, and cover the animals for the night."

The boy carried this order out and then returned to the wagon.

He found the doctor seated on his bunk, smoking a cigar, and reading the *Brentwood Evening News*.

He put the paper down and proceeded to give the boy a detailed insight into what would be expected of him.

Tom found that time was not likely to hang heavy on his hands, for there was lots to be done on every day but Sunday.

"What do you do with the horses when the weather is bad?" he asked.

"I've got a canvas attachment secured under the wagon which I put up in front. That shields them from the rain

and wind. In cold weather I can always find a place to stable them in over night."

At nine o'clock Tom turned into his bunk, and the last thing he remembered was that Doctor Quackenbush was still smoking and reading on his side of the wagon.

Tom was an early riser, and was up the next morning before six.

The doctor was still sleeping placidly in his bunk.

The boy's first duty was to attend to the horses; that done, he cleaned out the stove and started a fire.

By this time the doctor was up and dressed, and he started to prepare breakfast.

The meal done, and the dishes washed up, the horses were hitched to the wagon-pole, and, with Doctor Quackenbush on the driver's seat, the medicine outfit started en route for Cobalt.

As soon as the team got under way Tom got a case of empty bottles and proceeded to wash and rinse them, preparatory to filling them with the unrivalled Remedy and corking them up.

By the time the wagon reached the outskirts of Cobalt he had six dozen bottles ready for the finishing touches, which consisted in placing a small piece of chamois skin over the cork and tying it artistically in place with a piece of thin red ribbon.

They had passed quite through the village and entered on the road beyond before Tom had finished this part of his job.

Then he took a pot of paste from a shelf and affixed the label, printed in three colors, to each bottle.

The final part of his work was to wrap a printed document around each bottle and encase the whole in a strip of blue tissue paper.

When the six dozen were ready for market Dr. Quackenbush called him to drive the team.

"We're two miles west of the village now," he said, "so I guess it's safe enough for you to show yourself."

Accordingly, Tom took charge of the reins while the doctor attended to matters which required his attention inside.

As the team approached a cross-road a light wagon, driven by a bewhiskered man, with a boy by his side, shot suddenly into view, and came toward the medicine outfit.

Tom immediately recognized John Gilpin and Moses as the occupants of the vehicle.

"Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Tom. "I hope they won't recognise me!"

He pulled his hat down over his forehead, and turned his face away after turning the horses out so as to give the Gilpins room enough to pass by with safety.

In spite of his endeavor to escape recognition, Moses knew him right away, and called his father's attention to him.

The village auctioneer merely caught a fleeting glimpse of his face as they flew by, but he identified him just the same, and took note of the conveyance he was driving.

Instead of going home after reaching the village, Mr.



Gilpin hunted up Constable Black and told him under what circumstances he had met Tom Danvers on the road to Athens.

The constable at once hastened to his house, hitched up his rig, and started in pursuit of the boy, for whom he had a warrant.

In the meantime, Tom, unconscious that he had been recognized by his enemies, drove on in good spirits, and about noon came in sight of Athens.

Doctor Quackenbush directed him to pull up alongside the road, water the horses, and supply them with their accustomed bag of oats.

While Tom attended to the animals the doctor prepared a substantial lunch, which was soon on the table.

After they had discussed it, Tom asked the doctor what was in the different phials he saw arranged on one of the shelves.

His employer gave him the Latin names of the contents of all but one bottle.

"And what's in the last bottle? You didn't tell me that," said the boy.

"That," said Dr. Quackenbush, with a grim smile, "contains the juice of a large plant. It is a kind of fetid sap that is imported from Persia and the East Indies, and is much used in medicine. If I were to sprinkle a few drops around in here, you couldn't get out into the open air quick enough."

"It must be powerful stuff," laughed Tom. "I hope the cork won't come out accidentally."

"It won't if it's left alone."

Just then there was the sound of wheels and the rapid trot of a horse along the road, coming from the direction of Cobalt.

Neither Tom nor the doctor paid any attention to it.

Presently the vehicle came to a sudden stop.

A moment later the canvas at the back of the wagon was pulled aside, and the unwelcome features of Constable Black appeared at the opening.

Tom Danvers started up in surprise and consternation.

"Well, Tom," said the constable, with a wicked smile, for the boy was not a favorite of his, "I've come for you. You've got to go back with me to Cobalt."

"I'd rather not," objected Tom.

"I'm afraid your wishes will not be consulted in the matter. I hold a warrant for your arrest signed by the justice. So just step lively, unless you want me to come in there and drag you out."

"What's the charge against this boy?" asked Dr. Quackenbush, knitting his brows.

"Assault with intent to do bodily harm," replied Constable Black. "Come, Tom, I'm waiting for you."

"What am I going to do?" the boy asked the doctor. "Can't you stand him off while I escape over the seat and take to the fields?"

"I'll try," whispered the doctor. "If he should overtake you, here's a weapon that will put him to rout," and the wily practitioner reached for and handed Tom the phial

of asafetida. "Draw the cork and let him have a dose if you cannot otherwise avoid him."

Tom, holding fast to the bottle, made a sudden dive for the front seat and sprang down into the road.

Constable Black, however, was as quick as he was, and rushed around the wagon to cut off his retreat.

Tom dashed for the fence, climbed it, and was about to drop on the other side, when the agile officer ran up and caught him by the ankle.

"I've got you, Tom, so you might as well give up!" exclaimed the constable, triumphantly. "You're a pretty foxy boy, but you can't fool your uncle this trip."

He reached up to haul the boy down, when Tom, quick as a wink, drew the cork from the small phial and dashed some of the fluid in the officer's face.

Constable Black released his grip and fell to the ground as if he had been shot.

He lay there, gasping for breath, a truly pitiable object, while Tom clapped the cork into the mouth of the bottle, and holding his nose on account of the horrible stench that filled the air around the officer, jumped to the ground and made for the wagon as quick as he could.

Springing to the horses' heads, he yanked their empty dinner bags away, threw them into the doctor's lap, who was laughing heartily at the success of the boy's ruse, and, climbing up beside him, seized the reins and started the team forward at its best pace.

As for Constable Black, he staggered to his feet, a mighty sick man, and the last Tom and the doctor saw of him he was leaning against the fence gasping.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NIGHT ALARM.

"That's the time Constable Black got it in the neck," chuckled Tom, as he flicked the off horse lightly with the whiplash.

"He'll think he must have caught hold of a skunk instead of the boy he was after," smiled Dr. Quackenbush.

"That's right. Will that scent stick to his clothes?"

"Will it? I should say that it will. When he goes back to Cobalt everybody will think that he fell into a cess-pool."

Tom roared with delight.

"He'll have to hang that suit on the clothes line and let it air for a month."

"He'll find it advisable to buy a new suit, I'm thinking."

"Then he ought to make Deacon Gilpin pay for it."

"It puzzles me how he came to spot you in this wagon," said the doctor. "You didn't show yourself at all when passing through the village."

"I know how he got on to me," replied Tom. "When I started in to drive, after we left Cobalt well in the rear, Mr. Gilpin and his son came out of a cross-road and passed us in a light wagon. I pulled my hat down and turned my head away, but they evidently recognized me, and then carried the news to the constable."

"That accounts for his pursuit of the wagon," nodded



Dr. Quackenbush. "I doubt if he'll give you any more trouble."

"He might telegraph to the police at Athens to arrest me. Do you think I had better keep away from the wagon while you're in town?" asked the boy, anxiously.

"Perhaps you had better do so, to be on the safe side," replied the doctor.

"I can get out and walk after we get into the main street. I'll keep the wagon in sight, and hang around at a safe distance until you're ready to go on again."

Accordingly, just before the outfit reached the prominent corner at which the doctor intended to stop, Tom alighted and crossed to the other side of the way.

It was well that he did so, for the wagon had hardly been on the corner ten minutes before a policeman appeared, and, jumping into the vehicle, asked the owner of the Kickapoo Remedy where Tom Danvers was.

The doctor replied that the boy had left him soon after they had entered the town, and he could not say with certainty where he had gone.

The officer was permitted to search the wagon, and being satisfied that the boy was not in the vehicle, departed to make his report at headquarters.

Tom watched the policeman from the other side of the way, and chuckled to think how easily he had foiled the efforts of Constable Black to get him into his clutches.

He sat on a box and watched the doctor draw a crowd by means of his clear tenor voice, which he accompanied with a silver-toned banjo.

Then he amused the crowd with funny talk and finally got down to business.

Holding up a bottle of his Infallible Remedy, he told the spectators that what it wouldn't do for every throat and lung trouble under the sun wasn't worth mentioning.

He told them in a general way what it was made of—combining the extracts of certain well-known herbs, with the syrup of such a thing, to which was added a new distilled juice of remarkable quality of which he was the sole discoverer.

"This remedy," he said, "is truly a godsend to all afflicted with coughs, colds, sore throats, and even the much dreaded and almost universally fatal consumption. I cannot guarantee a cure under six bottles, which I sell in a neat case for the small sum of five dollars. In any event, I warrant this remedy to be worth its weight in diamonds. It is simply invaluable and positively infallible."

Quite a number of sales followed the doctor's impressive and apparently convincing harangue, and for a time he did a rushing business in the remedy.

Then he moved on to the next corner and repeated the performance, Tom following on the other side of the way, and much entertained with the novelty of his employer's manner of doing business.

The entire afternoon passed in this way, Tom approaching the wagon several times to show Dr. Quackenbush that he was in the vicinity.

"Jump in," said the doctor, at last, about six o'clock.

"I'm going to drive over to yonder restaurant, where we'll take our dinner."

The wagon came to a stop before the restaurant in question, and Tom was told to look after the horses and outfit while the head of the concern dined.

Three-quarters of an hour later Tom went inside himself, and had a good dinner at the doctor's expense.

Then he slowly drove the wagon up and down several streets while his employer enjoyed his second cigar inside.

As it grew dark they took up their stand near the Opera House. Tom lighted a couple of naphtha torches and stuck them up in the front of the wagon.

Then the doctor got out his banjo again and started to attract attention to his famous Kickapoo preparation.

It is needless to say that he easily succeeded in gathering a big crowd, and until nine o'clock did a large and profitable business.

"Now we'll close up shop," said Dr. Quackenbush, when the crowd had thinned down to a mere handful of curiously disposed onlookers. "Douse the lights and drive on straight ahead. When we get out of town we'll have a light repast and retire for the night."

The wagon proceeded several miles outside of Athens, on the road toward Elyria, and at length the proprietor ordered a halt.

The vehicle was drawn up under a wide-spreading oak tree, well out of the way of any passing conveyance, Tom released the horses from the pole and removed their harness.

Then he watered them and gave them their evening supply of oats.

By that time a cup of coffee and some bread and butter were ready for Tom, and after he had disposed of it he went to bed.

It was along toward two o'clock in the morning that he was suddenly awakened by a noise in the wagon.

There was no light in the caravan, but Tom easily saw that there was an intruder on the premises, who seemed to have stumbled over the table.

"Who's there?" he asked in a loud voice.

There was no reply, but he made out the indistinct form of a man crouching down at the end of the table.

Tom sprang out of his bunk and struck a match.

The flare of the light awoke Dr. Quackenbush and startled the interloper.

The fellow made a dive for the rear opening, and would have escaped only for a box that lay in his way, over which he stumbled, and went down sprawling, his head hitting the grate of the stove.

Before he could scramble to his feet Tom had him a prisoner.

"What's the trouble, Tom?" asked the doctor, getting up and striking a light.

"I've got hold of some chap that has no business to be in here. I suppose he's a thief," replied the lad, holding on to the struggling and swearing rascal.

The doctor lighted the reflector lamp, and in the glare



thus cast on the scene Tom recognized the intruder as the tough individual who had tried to hold him up behind the hedge on the road to Brentwood the evening before.

"So it's you, is it?" cried Tom. "What are you doing inside this wagon?"

"Nothin'. Only came in to have a snooze," said the fellow, sulkily.

"Oh, come now, that won't go down. You came in to see what you could pick up," answered Tom. "You tried to rob me last evening on the road to Brentwood, so it's plain you aren't above taking what comes in your way."

The doctor now took a hand in the proceedings.

"Look here, my fine fellow, you may thank your stars that it wasn't me that you woke up, or you probably would have caught an ounce of lead in your insides. I guess I'll have to tie you up and hand you over to the police of Elyria, where we are bound."

Tom let him get up, but interposed himself between him and the rear entrance, so he couldn't make a dash for liberty.

The fellow protested that he meant no harm.

He had no place to sleep, and merely took advantage of the covered wagon by the roadside to secure a night's lodging.

Neither Dr. Quackenbush nor Tom believed him.

"His companion is probably outside—a boy named Jim. It's my opinion that he meant to rob you if he could. If he isn't a regular crook he's next door to it."

The doctor was of the same opinion, but decided that it would be too much trouble to hold the rascal, turn him over to the police, and then appear against him in the police court next morning, so he ordered him to skip, and threatened if he didn't make tracks down the road to put a bullet in him.

The rascal was only too glad to get off with a whole skin, and left the wagon in short order.

After the light was turned out Tom watched from a slit in the canvas, and saw, as he expected, the boy Jim join his companion from the bushes, and both start off in the direction of Elyria as fast as they could walk.

He reported the fact to Dr. Quackenbush, and then they turned in again and slept until morning without being disturbed.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JIM.

The methods pursued by Dr. Quackenbush in Athens were repeated in Elyria, with eminently satisfactory results, and he left the town that night considerably richer in pocket.

At the end of Tom's first week of service he received six dollars from the doctor, according to arrangement, and was so well pleased with his job that he signed a contract to remain with his employer for six months.

Tom sent a letter to his mother from a big town en route, enclosing a postal order for \$5, and informing her of the nature of his employment, how he had heard of his brother,

and had got a line on his presumed whereabouts, where he hoped to meet him within a couple of months.

He also wrote a letter to Jennie Dean, in which he said a good many things that gave her great pleasure to read.

He directed both his mother and Jennie where to forward a letter within a certain time, and warned them not to breathe a word as to his route, lest Mr. Gilpin might, out of pure revenge, go to the expense of having him arrested and brought back to the village.

Tom helped the doctor manufacture the Kickapoo Remedy when their supply was short.

The materials for this preparation were easily obtained at any wholesale druggist's, so there was no occasion to carry a large supply in the wagon.

The various sized bottles in which the stuff was sold were ordered at intervals from Chicago by express, and were found awaiting them at the express offices in the towns indicated in the doctor's orders to the manufacturers.

Although Tom was kept pretty busy in one way or the other, he was, on the whole, well satisfied with his job, and time passed rapidly and pleasantly with him.

Thus over two months passed away, and the wagon began to penetrate the wilds of the great West.

Dr. Quackenbush was aiming for the Nevada gold-fields, where he expected to locate in Goldfield.

He had a touch of the gold fever in his system, and he thought he saw an easier way to make money than peddling the Kickapoo Remedy.

After spending a couple of days in Denver, the doctor loaded up with supplies, and the caravan left that city and headed toward Utah.

Two days later, at the close of a cloudless July day, the wagon toiled upward through the mountains toward a large mining camp, where the doctor expected to remain until next morning.

The sun had just disappeared behind the near mountain peaks, and all the gulches were filled with yellow light.

The shallows of the narrow mountain streams were golden, and the fringes of the pines were dull and dark no longer.

Coming to a level stretch of road, the horses were halted for a rest, and Tom, taking a tin bucket, started for a stream close by for water.

As he approached the water course he was surprised to see a dejected-looking boy sitting on a stone, gazing into the rapidly flowing stream.

"Hello!" said Tom, as the boy made no more movement than if he had been carved out of one of the big rocks so plentiful in that vicinity.

The lad looked up in a slow and listless kind of way.

Then it was that Tom, in utter surprise, recognized him as the boy Jim, who had been the companion of the hard-looking rascal who had so unceremoniously entered the wagon that night on the road to Elyria.

Evidently the boy knew him, too, for a faint grin rested for a moment on his woe-begone and half-starved features.



"You're Jim, aren't you?" said Tom, pausing, and swinging the pail to and fro.

The boy nodded.

"What's your other name?"

"Dunno. Ain't got none, I guess."

"Oh, come off! You must have another name."

"Nope."

Tom regarded the young derelict in wonder, and the other returned his stare without any special emotion.

"Where's your companion?" asked Danvers, at length.

Jim jerked his thumb up the ravine.

"Up the gulch?"

The boy nodded.

"How far up?"

"'Bout three miles."

"Three miles! And what are you doing here?"

"Nothin'. He shook me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Dunno. 'Spect I'll starve. Pretty near done up now."

A feeling of sympathy for this lad came over Tom.

"So that rascal is done with you for good?"

"That's what he said. Told me to git or he'd throw me down the mount'ns."

"I shouldn't expect much else from him. He's a hard nut."

"Yep."

"What's his name?"

"Dan."

"Hasn't he got another name, either?"

"Yep. Calls himself Mullins."

"What did Mullins shake you for?"

"Didn't want me round, I guess."

"What's he doing up the gulch?"

"Diggin'."

"For gold?" asked Tom, in surprise.

"Dunno."

"Is he all alone?"

"Nope. Got a young chap with him."

"Another boy?"

"Nope. Older'n you."

"You look hungry, Jim. Don't you want a square meal?"

The boy's eyes glistened, and he ran his tongue over his dry lips.

"Where kin I get one?" he asked eagerly.

"Come with me and I'll see you get enough to eat."

"I'll come," said Jim, getting up from the stone.

Tom filled his bucket and started for the wagon, which was out of sight around a turn.

Jim followed him with a meek and shuffling gait, his hands in his pockets.

"Who have you there?" asked the doctor, as they came up.

Tom explained the identity of the boy, and Dr. Quackenbush regarded the young stranger with no little astonishment.

"So this is the boy you met that night behind the hedge, with that rascal who afterward tried to rob me?"

"It's the same boy."

"What's he doing out here in the wilderness?"

"You'll have to ask him, doctor; I didn't. He's half starved, and, with your permission, I'll give him some supper when it's cooked."

"He's welcome to all he can eat," said his employer, critically examining Jim with his eyes, and mentally deciding that he was in pretty bad shape.

Tom, who had got to be a tolerably good cook by this time, under the doctor's instructions, went ahead with the meal as daylight gradually died out of the landscape, while Dr. Quackenbush amused himself talking to the stranger, whose laconic as well as odd replies somewhat amused him.

Although Jim was desperately hungry, and his eyes wandered wistfully toward the wagon whence proceeded the aroma of hot coffee and fried ham and eggs, he bore the torture with Spartan-like fortitude.

"Where are you bound for?" asked the doctor.

"No place in pertickler," replied Jim solemnly.

"Did you know there's a big mining camp up the mountains?"

"Nope."

"What did you expect was going to become of you way out in these wilds?"

"Didn't expect nothin'."

"Didn't you and Mullins have any provisions?" asked the doctor, in astonishment.

"Yep. We had some, but he ate most of it up himself."

"And you stood for that?"

"Couldn't help myself."

Then the doctor asked why Mullins had chased him off, and what the man was doing up the ravine.

The lad's answers convinced the proprietor of the Kickapoo Remedy that Mullins and his new companion had discovered gold and were working their find.

He couldn't understand, however, why they had not availed themselves of Jim's services, which ought to have been valuable to them.

It was little short of murder to drive that boy off into the solitude, with almost certain starvation staring him in the face.

There must be something at the bottom of it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SOME TALL SHARPSHOOTING.

Tom now called the doctor and Jim to supper, and for the first time the stranger lost his listlessness and moved about briskly.

There was room enough at the table to accommodate the three by crowding the plates, and Jim was furnished with an empty box to sit on.

A liberal supply of ham and eggs was placed before him, and the food disappeared into his mouth with amazing rapidity.

It was like shoveling coal into a furnace the way Jim



transferred the provender from the plate to nature's feeding aperture.

His eyes stuck out like those of a lobster during the operation, which evidently afforded him great delight and satisfaction.

It was clear he hadn't enjoyed such a meal for heaven knows how long.

The coffee followed the food like a gush of water into a cleft in the rocks, and when there was nothing left Jim uttered a kind of sigh of content, although he wasn't half satisfied yet.

The doctor thought it best not to let him eat any more for the present, but permitted him a second cup of coffee, which vanished in a twinkling.

After the dishes were washed up, in which operation Jim was allowed to assist as the wiper, the team started on again toward "The Lucky Chance" mining camp.

Jim went along as a matter of course, and he offered no objection to the free ride, nor the destination they were bound for.

There was no moon up, but the night was bright with stars, and the road was straight and plain before them.

Tom and Jim sat on the driver's seat, the former looking after the horses, while Dr. Quackenbush lay on his bunk, inside, taking the world easy.

"How would you like to go on with us to Goldfield, Jim, if the doctor's willing to take you?" asked Tom, who, for no reason that he could understand, had taken quite a fancy to the strange boy.

"I jest as soon go as not," replied Jim. "Mebbe I'd rather go than not," he added, "for I'd like to get clean away from Dan."

"It's a wonder you stuck to that rascal," said Tom. "How came you to do it? According to your account, he treated you worse than a savage."

"I dunno why I didn't. Afraid, I guess. I was alwus goin' to cut loose, but somehow I never did. He wanted me to help him steal, but I wouldn't. I guess that's why he knocked me around."

"Why did he come away out here?"

"Said he was goin' to the mines."

"What mines? Any one in particular?"

"Dunno. He never told me nothin' except what he couldn't help."

"It's a wonder you two weren't arrested as vagrants East, if for nothing worse, and sent to jail."

"We wuz twice; but Dan had a lot of files sewn up in his clothes, and he broke out both times, and I went with him."

"Now that you've shaken him for good you ought to get on. You'll find plenty of work to do in Goldfield."

"I'd like to work where you do," said Jim. "I kinder like you."

"I don't know whether the doctor will have anything for you to do out there," replied Tom; "but if he has, I'll try to get him to take you on."

"I kin work," asserted Jim. "I'll work for my grub

and lodgin'. I ain't got no use for money. Wouldn't know what to do with it if I had. I'd jest as soon you took the money if you let me stay with you."

"You're foolish to talk like that, Jim. If you've no use for money now, you will one of these days, so all you'll have to do is to save it."

"There's a hull lot of lights yonder," said Jim suddenly, pointing off to the right, where the road swung around in a semicircle.

"That must be 'The Lucky Chance' camp," answered Tom, chirping to the horses, they having been taking things easy ever since leaving their last stopping place.

He called in to the doctor.

The proprietor of the Kickapoo Remedy outfit came up behind the seat and looked ahead into the night.

"That's the camp, without a doubt," he said. "Pick out the best vacant spot you see near the center of the place, and we'll come to anchor for the night."

Their advent created something of a sensation, and a crowd of miners and other habitues crowded around the wagon when Tom drew up, not far from the store, which was also a hotel in its way, though its way was rather tough.

"Hello!" exclaimed a burly six-footer, pushing his way to the front. "Tenderfoots, I reckon. What in thunder have yer got in that waggin? The Kickapoo Remedy for coughs, colds, and—haw! haw! haw!"

The crowd joined in the laugh, and looked at the two boys on the seat with much interest.

"Hey! Whar did you come from?" inquired the six-footer.

"Denver," replied Tom.

"Who sent you out this here way lookin' for coughs, colds, and—haw! haw! haw!"

"No one sent us. We're going on to Goldfield."

"You're goin' to Goldfield, are you? Wall, you won't find no coughs nor colds out there, neither. Is thar anythin' the matter with your upper story, stranger?"

"I hope not," answered Tom, pleasantly.

"Are you ther boss of the outfit?"

"No; I'm just the driver. The proprietor is inside."

"Tell him to show himself, then. We'd all like to see the feller who's peddlin' medicine for coughs, colds, and—haw! haw! haw!"

Dr. Quackenbush immediately came to the front.

"Are you the man who's come west to cure coughs, colds, and—haw——"

"Yes," replied the doctor, interrupting him, "and I think you need a bottle badly."

"Oh, you do, stranger? I look as though I was on my last legs, don't I?" sarcastically. "Wall, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. If you kin get the drop on me quicker'n I can have you covered, I'll——"

"Buy a bottle," said the doctor, yanking a pair of revolvers from his pockets like greased lightning and aiming them at the six-footer just as his hand went to his hip



"Come, now, ante up your dollar, or maybe I'll have the coroner sit on you to find out what you died of."

The crowd gave a gasp of surprise, and the six-footer turned green.

It was all over in a moment, for Dr. Quackenbush returned his guns to his pockets with one movement, while Tom gazed apprehensively at the big miner, wondering what he would do now.

"Say, stranger, you ain't no tenderfoot, and I'll come up with the dollar, for you've earned it fairly. You're the first man I know that has ever got the drop on me, by the horned toad you are! Here's the dollar, and shake."

The doctor leaned down, took the money, and shook hands.

"Now come over to the saloon and liquor," said the six-footer, in a friendly way.

The crowd cheered the doctor as he alighted, and the whole mob escorted him across the way to the principal saloon in the camp.

Tom, assisted by Jim, took out the horses, tied them to the front wheel, and put their blankets on.

There was nothing else to do, so Tom asked Jim to watch the wagon while he went across to see how the doctor was getting on with the crowd.

As a matter of fact, he was getting on swimmingly.

When Tom appeared, he had just ordered drinks for the house, and that made him solid with the mob at once, for they were already predisposed in his favor.

"Tell you what I'll do, stranger," said the six-footer. "After that lightnin' exhibition you give us outside, you ought to be somethin' on the shoot. I've got six shots in this gun'r mine jest achin' to match six of yours. If you kin shoot as good as me in six trials, I'll give you the price of a hundred bottles of that stuff 'r yourn. If you can't, you'll hand me out a hundred plunks. Are you game to call me?"

"I am," replied the doctor quietly, to Tom's amazement.

"Nough said. Bill, stick a six-spot again that wall yonder," said the big man.

The six of spades was fastened up at ten paces.

The six-footer then drew his gun, and one by one he plunked the six spots in the center.

This remarkable performance occasioned no surprise among those present, who regarded the doctor with great interest as he drew his revolver.

"Git another six-spot, Bill, and put her beside the other," said the crack shooter, with a grim smile.

"Never mind," put in the doctor. "Just move that card over a couple of inches."

"Why, what are you goin' to do?" asked the six-footer, in a mystified way.

"I'll show you. Do as I request you, Mister Bill."

Bill moved the card over just far enough to leave the six bullet holes exposed.

Hardly had he stepped back when Dr. Quackenbush fired as rapidly as he could pull the self-cocking trigger.

When the smoke had cleared away the card looked just the same as before.

"Why, you hain't hit the card at all, stranger!" cried the big man, bursting into a boisterous and sarcastic laugh.

"I didn't intend to," replied the doctor, coolly.

"Then what on earth was you firin' at?"

"Those holes you made."

The six-footer gasped, while the crowd stared.

"Well, you hain't come within a mile of 'em," said the big man. "Hand over the money."

"Hold on a moment!" said the doctor. "What'll you bet I didn't hit them?"

"I'll bet you another hundred."

"I'll take you up. There's my two hundred," he said, flashing out his wad and stripping off the right number of bills. "Now cover that. If I didn't hit those holes the money is yours."

The big man came up with his two hundred.

"I call you," he said briskly. "Now stranger, show up."

"Knock that card down, somebody!" said Dr. Quackenbush.

Bill was the nearest, and he snatched the card from the wall.

A buzz of astonishment rose from the crowd, for there on the wall was the duplicate of the big man's six bullet holes, where a moment before had been smooth, untouched wood.

There was no doubt in the minds of all present that the stranger had punctured every hole made by the crack shot of the camp in the six of spades.

## CHAPTER IX.

### JACK MAKES A DISCOVERY.

The six-root pistol crack fairly gaped at Dr. Quackenbush.

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes.

The six evenly placed holes in the wall, beside his own perforations, were indisputable, however, and he had to admit that for once in his life he had more than met his match at revolver practice.

A man capable of such extraordinary marksmanship, off hand at that, was a person to be respected, and every one of the spectators took their hats off, metaphorically speaking, to the newcomer at the camp.

"Pard," said the big man, in a tone of admiration, "you're the first man to down me at this game. I've never seen your equal. Shake once more, and take the money. You've won it hands down. Who are you, anyway? What's your handle?"

"You mean my name, I suppose," replied the doctor, pleasantly, accepting the horny hand of the six-footer and then coolly transferring the \$400 from the bar to his pocket. "My name is Dr. Josiah Quackenbush, discoverer, manufacturer, and vendor of the world-famous Kickapoo



Remedy for coughs, colds, sore throat, weak lungs, etc., etc. What's your name?"

"I'm Gid Parsons, superintendent of the Lucky Chance Mine. You're on your way to Goldfield, eh?"

"That's my destination."

"Expect to do business out there?" grinned the six-footer.

"I am interested in gold mining, and expect to get in on the ground floor in some paying proposition."

"I should advise you to try one of the newer districts beyond Goldfield, pard. Say Manhattan, or Paradise. The latter place, I hear, is a comer. I'd go there myself if I wasn't a fixture here. Let's liquor. Step up, boys, and have somethin'."

This invitation caused a rush for the bar, and the men in the saloon lined up two and three deep.

Tom had been an interested observer of the rather exciting proceedings.

Dr. Quackenbush had been presented to him in a new light.

He marvelled greatly at the doctor's extraordinary accuracy as a pistol shot.

He was certainly a wonder, and could not have introduced himself in a better way to the notice of the denizens of the Lucky Chance camp.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that a man rushed into the saloon in a state of considerable excitement.

"Say, boys!" he exclaimed, "I want you to help me out!"

"What's the matter?" asked Gid Parsons, wheeling around from the bar. "What's troubling you, Ike Baxter?"

"You all know I've taken up a claim down in Placer Gulch?"

"Yes, we know it, and we've all thought you was a fool to do it," replied Parsons frankly. "Have you come to tell us that you've made a strike, eh?"

"I ain't sayin' nothin' about a strike, but it's a good claim, all right. I want your help because my property has been jumped."

"Jumped!" cried a dozen voices in a breath.

"Yes, jumped!"

"Who are the critters that have jumped it? I thought the example we made of the last chap who did such a thing was warnin' enough," said Parsons.

"I dunno their names. There's two of them. One is a smooth-faced, tough-lookin' critter. He ordered me off with my own gun. The other is a young feller, 'bout twenty, I should say, who didn't take no hand in the proceedin's, and I'll give him the credit of bein' willin' to argue the matter; but the other chap shut him up. It's up to you, boys, to clear 'em out in short order, for I can't do it alone."

"We'll do it all right. How came those fellows to get the upper hand of you in the first place?"

"I was obliged to go down to Red Dog for some tools yesterday, and I stayed all night and part of the mornin' with some friends of mine I found there. When I got back

to-night there was them two fellows in the little cabin I put up on my claim. I wanted an explanation, and the tough-lookin' rooster said he'd give it to me with my gun, which he snatched up and pointed at me. He then ordered me off, declarin' the claim was his and that he meant to hold it. Only two days ago I struck a promisin' vein on that claim, and I don't reckon I'm goin' to let the first onery cuss that comes along do me out of it, after I've put in three months of steady work on it."

"No one's goin' to do you out of it, pard," said the superintendent, reassuringly. "This claim jumpin' don't go round here no more'n elsewhere. We'll let those squatters know that we do business in a shorter way than goin' to law and wastin' money to get fair play."

Tom had listened to the discussion with considerable interest, and noted that there was a menacing significance in the superintendent's words that augured ill for the two men who had jumped Ike Baxter's property.

He was curious to learn what the crowd intended doing to the two interlopers.

He wondered if they really had thoughts of lynching them.

He easily guessed that the tough-looking chap must be the rascal who had brought Jim out to that locality and then driven him off into the wilds.

"Step up and have somethin', Ike," said Parsons. "We'll go down to the gulch by and by and clean those misfits out in short order."

Tom went back to the wagon, and found Jim squatting on the seat.

"Say, Jim," said Tom, "your friend Dan Mullins will soon be up against it hard."

"How?" asked Jim, without any particular interest.

"He and his new companion have jumped another man's claim down in the gulch, and there'll be something doing in a way he won't like before long."

Jim grinned, as if the fact that Mullins was likely to see trouble didn't worry him greatly.

"Where did you meet with that young man that's with Mullins now?" asked Tom.

"He came up the gulch after Dan and me struck a cabin with a lot of stuff in it, as though somebody lived there, where Dan said he was goin' to stay a while. He got talkin' to Dan, and showed him a bunch of money that he said he earned at a place called Red Dog. Dan told him he'd sell him a half interest in the cabin and ground for the money, and took the feller out to show him the place. Then they started in to dig a hole in the ground, and afore long Dan came up to the cabin and told me to git, as he didn't want me round any more."

"Did the other fellow know that Dan drove you off?"

"Dunno. He didn't seem like a bad chap. He had a small moustache, and Dan called him Jack, which I guess must have been his name."

Tom caught his breath, for somehow the name and the slight description reminded him of his fugitive brother.

"How tall was he?" he asked Jim earnestly.



"A little taller'n you."

"You didn't hear his other name, did you?"

"Nope."

"Did he have a scar over his right eyebrow?" asked Tom suddenly.

"Yep. A sort of half moon. How'd you know that?"

"Gracious!" gasped Tom. "I do believe that's my brother."

"Your brother?" said Jim, wonderingly.

"Yes. Did you notice if he had a gold ring on his little finger?"

"Yep. A kind of snake with red eyes."

"It is my brother!" cried Tom. "And he's with that rascal Mullins. I must see him at once and warn him against that scoundrel, who means no doubt to rob him of his money. No time is to be lost, for the miners here mean to visit the gulch pretty soon, and it may go hard with my brother being in that fellow's company. Will you come with me, Jim? I'm going down to the gulch as fast as I can get there. I want you to show me where the cabin is."

"I'll go," agreed Jim, apparently anxious to serve his new friend.

Tom, with a resolute expression in his eyes, told Jim to wait a moment, and then crossed over to the saloon.

"I want to borrow one of your revolvers," he said, addressing the doctor.

Dr. Quackenbush handed him one without a word, and Tom returned to the wagon.

"Come on, Jim," he said. "We've got to hustle."

With that they started off down the road.

They were hardly out of sight along the moonlit trail when Gid Parsons, the doctor, Ike Baxter and nearly a dozen miners came out of the saloon and started down the same road toward Placer Gulch.

A very significant feature of the procession was that one of the men carried a coil of thin rope over his shoulder.

## CHAPTER X.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CABIN IN PLACER GULCH.

The boys had more than a two-mile walk before them down the road, and as much more up the gulch.

Tom set a rapid pace, however, as he believed time was precious, and, besides, he was in a fever of eager anticipation to meet the young man he implicitly believed was his brother Jack.

In less than twenty minutes the boys reached the gulch and turned into it.

They then proceeded with more deliberation, for walking was not so easy and the way was dark and somewhat difficult.

"How much further is the cabin, Jim?" asked Tom.

"Not far," replied Jim, who was in the lead.

Fifteen minutes later they saw a dim light ahead.

It shone through the cabin window.

Tom, dubious as to the reception they were likely to receive from Mullins, crept softly up to the window and looked in.

The sight that met his eyes caused him to hold his breath. On a pile of blankets in a corner of the cabin lay a figure he recognized at once as his brother.

Bending over him was the man Mullins, with a knife in his teeth and his hand in his companion's pocket.

As Tom looked, Mullins drew out a buckskin pouch, and then, rising, stood near the candle and unwinding the string that secured its mouth poured the contents, a number of gold coins, into the palm of his hand.

With a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes he was returning the money to the pouch when the sleeping man rose on his elbow, detected what he was doing, felt for his property in his pocket and then sprang to his feet.

"So, you would rob me, Mullins, would you?" he cried, reaching for the pouch.

The rascal drew back, with a snarl of surprise and anger.

"Give me back my money. Then I'll leave this place, for I wish to have no dealings with a thief. I am satisfied now that you do not own this claim."

"Hang you! I'll give you this knife in your gullet!" cried Mullins, snatching the blade from his teeth and springing on Jack Danvers.

Tom sprang for the door, pushed it open and rushed inside.

Mullins had his companion at a clear disadvantage, and, seeing his chance, raised the knife to plunge it into his victim's breast.

Tom, seeing his brother's peril, drew his revolver and fired at the rascal's shoulder.

With a howl of agony, Mullins's arm dropped helpless at his side, and the knife clattered on the floor.

Jack Danvers immediately pushed him back, and rose quickly to his feet.

"Jack—my brother!" cried Tom, running to him.

"Tom! Is it possible it is you?" exclaimed the astonished young man, grasping his brother by the hand.

"It's me all right, brother Jack," replied Tom. "I see I've arrived just in time to save you."

"You did that," gazing at the writhing Mullins. "I thought I was a dead one when that fellow raised his knife above my head."

He stooped down and picked up his money-pouch, which lay on the floor.

"I was a fool to trust the rascal, but I thought he owned this claim."

"He owns nothing. This claim belongs to a man named Ike Baxter."

"A man came here and claimed it some hours since, but I had my doubts as to his right, for he was tougher-looking than this Mullins."

"He'll be back again with half the miners from the Lucky Chance camp to support him, so you'd better come away with me, Jack, before they reach here, or you'll find yourself in trouble."

"Why, what trouble can I get into? I haven't made any claim on this shack or the ground. Mullins is the man who will have to face the music, if anybody."



"Well, you were in his company when he held Ike Baxter off, and you'll be regarded as his accomplice. As there's no use of you taking any chances, I want you to come away at once."

"All right. I was going, anyway, as I wouldn't stay any longer with Mullins for a share in a gold mine. I hate to leave him in the condition he is, though, for you seem to have hurt him badly."

"I didn't give him any more than he deser——"

The sentence was cut short by the banging open of the door and the entrance of Gid Parsons, Ike Baxter, Dr. Quackenbush and as many of the miners as could crowd inside the cabin.

The intruders were rather surprised at the scene that met their eyes.

"Tom," said the doctor, starting forward, in astonishment, "what brings you here?"

"This is my brother, doctor," replied Tom. "Don't you remember him? You met him once, back East."

"Of course I recollect him," replied the doctor.

"Hello!" said Parsons, "what's the matter with that chap on the floor? Seems like he's hurt."

"That's the fellow who ordered me off my property and said the claim was his," interjected Baxter.

"So ho! And the other chap? Is he t'other one?"

"Yes; but he didn't make any move ag'in me."

"I'll go bail for this young man," said the doctor, placing his hand on Jack Danver's shoulder. "I'll warrant he meant no harm in this matter."

"All right, Doc, what you say goes with us every time. Now, you chap, whatever your name is, what's the matter with you?"

"I'm shot," groaned Mullins.

"Shot, eh? Who shot you?"

"That cub over there."

"Yes, I shot him," spoke up Tom, and he explained why he had to do it.

"You seem to be a pretty cussed sort, Mullins," said the superintendent. "You deliberately jumped another man's claim without as much as sayin' by your leave, then you turn around and rob your companion, and when he catches you doin' it you try to knife him. Seems to me there's only one way of dealin' with a scoundrel of your stamp, and that is to give you a lift in the world. What have you got to say for yourself?"

Mullins had nothing to say—he simply scowled and groaned with the pain of his wound.

"Well, boys, you're the jury in this here case. Is he guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," was the unanimous verdict.

"Correct. Now what's to be done with him?"

"Hang him!" suggested several.

Others, however, objected; as they didn't fancy the idea of executing a wounded man.

Dr. Quackenbush made an examination of the wound and declared that he was not seriously injured.

"The ball is imbedded in the tissues under the shoulder-

blade," he said. "It will have to be extracted before he can use his arm again. Better carry him up to the camp and I'll operate on him. Then you can decide what you'll do with him, but in any case I object to his being strung up. He deserves it, perhaps, but I'm opposed to lynch law."

The majority agreed with the doctor, but the men were averse to carrying the rascal a matter of five miles.

"I don't want him 'round here," said Baxter, bluntly. "If you leave him I'm liable to pitch him out into a gulley, where he may lie till he rots, for all I care."

Much against their will the men consented to burden themselves with Mullins as far as the road, where they proposed to leave him for the doctor to drive down in the wagon to attend to him.

"Then you can take him on to Red Dog in the mornin'," said Gid Parsons, "with a note from me to the deputy sheriff of the county. He'll clap him in jail, and I guess Mullins won't bother this part of the country no more."

The delegation from Lucky Chance camp then took up its return line of march, accompanied by Tom, his brother, Jim (who had remained in the background) and Dr. Quackenbush.

Mullins was deposited on a soft spot beside the road, with Jim and Jack Danvers to watch him, while the rest went on to the camp.

Tom hitched the horses to the wagon, and drove the doctor down to the entrance of the gulch.

Dr. Quackenbush had Mullins lifted into the vehicle, his coat stripped off and the upper part of his body extended on the table.

While he probed for the ball the rascal raised a terrible howl, for the operation hurt him like sixty.

No attention was paid to his strenuous kicking, however, the bullet was located and extracted, after which the doctor applied a bandage and he was laid on Tom's bed.

When the wagon returned to Lucky Chance the rascal was accommodated with a bunk for the night in the back of the saloon, his hands and feet being bound to prevent him taking French leave if he felt in condition to attempt it.

Tom had a long talk with his brother before turning in that night.

He told him how he had come out West with the doctor, after being obliged to leave Cobalt suddenly to avoid arrest for knocking down Mr. Gilpin because the auctioneer called Jack a thief.

"We, that is the Deans, mother and I, know you're not a thief, Jack," said Tom, "but I'm sorry to say that, owing to the fact that you were caught digging up the Squire's stolen property, the bulk of public opinion is against you. I hope the truth will yet come out so that you can return."

"I hope so, but how I'm going to prove my innocence is more than I can see," replied Jack, with a melancholy shake of his head.

And it was more than Tom could see, either, as the case stood.



## CHAPTER XI.

## A GHASTLY DISCOVERY.

Next morning Gid Parsons and those of the miners around gave Dr. Quackenbush and his Kickapoo outfit a hearty send-off.

The wagon was uncommonly well loaded, for Dan Mullins was in one of the bunks, and Jack Danvers and Jim had been assured of a free ride and feed to Goldfield.

The mining town of Red Dog was in the valley between two mountain ranges, and eight miles from the Lucky Chance mine.

The wagon drew up in front of the hotel at ten o'clock.

Dr. Quackenbush got out and went into the building to make inquiries for the deputy sheriff.

He was directed to his office a little distance up the street.

The deputy sheriff was entertaining a squad of idlers in the room when the doctor arrived and asked for him.

"I'm the man you want," said a tall, angular individual, in a rough suit, who was straddling a chair, with his arms crossed over the back of it, squirting a stream of tobacco juice with great accuracy into a spittoon two feet away. "What can I do for you, stranger?"

Dr. Quackenbush handed him the note he had brought from Gid Parsons, and the deputy sheriff read it with some deliberation.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, doctor," he said, affably, rising from his chair. "My name is Henry Case. Boys, this is Dr. Quackenbush, from the East, but no tenderfoot, by the Great Horsefly, for he's done what no one else has done to my knowledge, and that is beat Gid Parsons at a shootin' match. Gid put a bullet into every mark on a six-spot, which he's done before more'n once, and this gentleman perforated every one of the holes immediately afterward. That's tall shootin', by gum! Where's the prisoner mentioned by Gid?"

"In the wagon, outside."

"He seems to be an onery cuss, from what Gid says. We'll have him in here. I'll lock him up in the strong-room and we'll liquor."

Mullins was brought into the deputy's office.

Mr. Case looked him over and then marched him into a large, cell-like room at the back of the office.

Having secured the door with a stout padlock, the deputy invited the doctor and all hands to the nearest saloon, where they spent half an hour together.

Jack and Tom Danvers were requested to make depositions before a notary, the doctor also swore that Mullins had attempted to rob the wagon a couple of months previous in the East, and signed a statement to that effect.

"There's enough against that rascal to send him to jail for several moons," said Case, "if nothin' worse happens to him before he gets there. In my opinion a noose around the neck would be the most effective way to cure such rascals as he of their cussedness, and I guess this chap will come to it sooner or later."

Dr. Quackenbush returned with the deputy-sheriff to his office and sat for an hour talking to that official on mining matters.

Case was very enthusiastic over a new silver mine, which promised great results, that had lately been discovered in the western part of Mexico, and the doctor caught the infection.

The deputy produced documents he had received from a friend of his on the spot, that spoke encouragingly about the new mine, and he advised Dr. Quackenbush to give up his trip to Goldfield and start immediately for that part of Mexico where the silver mine was situated, assuring him that this was the time for him to get in on the ground floor with ready cash before the developments had proceeded so far that the mine would be taken out of the market.

The doctor decided to follow the man's advice and head southward instead of westward, right away.

After he had concluded the interview he announced his intention to the three boys, asking them if they were willing to go along.

Neither Tom nor his brother had any objection to offer, and as for Jim, who was hardly considered in the proposition, he wanted to go where Tom did, and the doctor said he might stick to the caravan.

Accordingly, after laying in some additional supplies, the horses' heads were turned southward and the party left Red Dog en route for Mexico.

It was a considerable journey from central Colorado down through the wilds of New Mexico to the Mexican border, for there were mountains to climb in part and to get around where the trail was practicable, and for many days they did not meet with a soul along the route.

The wagon entered Mexico within sight of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

The weather was so warm now that as day advanced the sun waxed hotter and hotter, and all hands down to the perspiring horses, found traveling a bore.

Naturally they proceeded but slowly, and most of the journeying was done during the hours of darkness.

During the heat of the day the horses were unhitched and stabled under their canvas awning, while the doctor and the boys slept the hours away.

Dr. Quackenbush could speak Spanish like a native, and this stood him in good stead down in this region where the language was all the go.

After stopping for the greater part of two days and a night at a big hacienda in the foothills of the Sierra Madre, the Don who lived there furnished the doctor with a peon guide to point out a trail through the range into Sonora County.

Leaving the mountains behind they continued on to the south, and west toward the Gulf of California.

At last they reached their destination, a little Mexican town near the coast.

Not far away was the mountain range, running parallel with the gulf, in whose fastnesses was the New Eldorado Silver Mine the doctor was interested in.



On the morning after their arrival at San Ignacio, soon after Jack Danvers and the doctor started off to visit the mine, Tom, attracted by the blue water of the gulf, only a short distance away, decided to go to the shore to see if he could find a secluded spot to take a swim.

Jim, as a matter of course, went with him.

At this point the shore was lonesome and unfrequented, and there was no lack of places where they could sport at their leisure in the water.

Directly opposite, probably a mile away, was a small island called Santa Cruz.

After remaining in the water as long as they cared, the boys dressed and walked along the shore.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom, as they rounded a jutting point of land. "What's that? Blessed if it isn't a vessel stranded on the shore. Let's take a look at it."

As they approached they saw that it was a small schooner, in a fair state of preservation, sunk in the sands as low as the "bends."

Apparently she had gone ashore at this point in a storm, and now lay at high-water mark.

The stumps of two masts, that had gone by the board, projected above her deck.

Her broken bowsprit pointed to the southwest.

A stove-pipe, thrust through the planking, close to the fore-scuttle, spoke of a cook-room below.

In the center of the after part of the derelict was a raised section of deck, ornamented with an oblong skylight, suggesting a cabin below.

There was an open companionway leading down into it.

Drawn up close to the water's edge, her painter secured to a stake driven into the sand, was a small and rather dilapidated sailboat.

All these facts the two boys noted as they drew near the wreck.

"Come, Jim, we might as well go aboard this stranded craft and see how she looks below."

As her deck was only a yard above the sand it was an easy matter to spring up on the planks, and Tom did so, followed by his companion.

They walked up and down the deck first and then Tom paused and looked down into the gloomy companionway.

"I'll bet she's been cleaned out by the natives long ago," he remarked. "However here goes."

He put one foot on the discolored brass-bound step and then came to a sudden halt, for at that moment a strange, weird-like sound came up from below.

At first Tom couldn't understand the nature of the vibratory noise, but at last he made it out as a man singing; but such a song and such a voice—never in his life before had he heard anything approaching it.

"The crew sat around the dead man's chest.

Yo ho, and a bottle of rum!

To fill their skins they were tryin' their best.

Yo ho, and a bottle of rum!"

The villainous couplet ended in a long drawn-out cackle of insane-like laughter that seemed to die away in the singer's throat.

"Gee!" exclaimed Tom. "Whoever is down there must be a corker; but he talks English at any rate."

"Help, for the love of heaven, help!" was wafted up the companionway, in a feeble voice.

"What the dickens can be the matter with that chap?" said Tom. "He's calling for help now, and from the sound one would think he was at his last gasp."

The boy hesitated about penetrating the cabin.

There was no telling what he might be up against down there.

"Water—water! For the love of heaven—water!" came up from the depths.

There was no mistaking that agonized appeal.

"There must be something wrong with that fellow. Maybe he fell down the steps and injured himself so he can't move. Judging from the tone of his voice he seems to be in a desperately bad way. Follow me, Jim, and we'll see what's the trouble."

Down the companionway ran Tom, with Jim close at his heels.

In a moment both stood in the small, low cabin.

The sudden transition from the glare of the sunshine to the gloom of the cabin naturally blinded them to objects below.

At first the place seemed as dark as a dungeon, but gradually their eyes grew accustomed to the surroundings.

While they stood in the middle of the cabin they heard a kind of delirious raving coming from the landward side of the vessel.

"The crew sat around the dead man's chest.

Yo ho—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

It was a blood-curdling kind of laugh that made Tom shiver as he listened to it.

"Water—water! For heaven sake—water! I'm burnin' up. I'm—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Good lord!" cried Tom. "What can be the matter with the man?"

He struck a match and approached a bunk where he made out a tossing object stretched at full length.

Holding the match up he looked at the man.

"My gracious! What's the meaning of this? He's bound hand and foot."

The match dropped from his fingers and expired.

Tom struck a second lucifer.

A bearded, weather-beaten, sailor-like man lay in the bunk, secured there by thin ropes drawn across his neck, his chest, his waist, his thighs and his ankles, so that movement was almost impossible.

His cheeks were sunken, his staring eyes glassy, and his lips, drawn back in a hyena-like snarl, were flecked with foam and blood.

Truly, he was a ghastly-looking object.



## CHAPTER XII.

## A MILLION IN GOLD.

The poor wretch seemed to be conscious of their presence, for he cried out, in a hoarse whisper:

"Water—water—water!"

"There's some crooked work here," said Tom. "The man is dying for want of water and probably food. Some infernal scoundrel has, no doubt, robbed him and secured him here so that his crime might go undetected. I wonder where I shall find any water?"

Tom made out a lantern on the table and lighted it, then, with his drawn jack-knife, he cut the man's bonds.

The poor fellow essayed to rise, but the effort was quite beyond his strength, and he fell back, with a despairing groan.

"Water—water!" he gasped.

"Where shall I find some? Any in the cabin?" asked Tom.

With an effort the sailor raised his arm and pointed at a small doorway leading into the hold.

Tom took the lantern and went in that direction.

He stepped into the hold, traversed an empty space and then came to the galley, which was fitted up with a stove and several lockers.

There was a keg just outside the door of the bulkhead which separated the galley from the hold proper.

Tom kicked it and the sound it returned showed that it was partly full of something which, on investigation, proved to be water.

The boy seized a pannikin that lay on a locker, filled it with water, and returned to the side of the forlorn wretch as soon as he could.

He put it to the man's lips.

The sailor seized it with his hands and almost bit through the tin, such was his eagerness to get a taste of the precious fluid.

His throat, however, was half paralyzed, and he showed symptom's of strangulation after the first swallow.

Tom pulled the pannikin back, though it took an effort to do so, until the man recovered his breath, and then allowed him to drink again, but more slowly.

He clung to the tin until every drop and gone down his throat, and then with a sigh he let his head fall back on the pillow and his eyes closed.

"If he had some liquor now it would brace him up until he was in condition to eat something," thought Tom.

He returned to the pantry again and looked it over, but nothing in the shape of liquor was there.

There was a supply of eatables, however, some of which were no longer fit for use, as if they had lain there several days, untouched.

Returning to the cabin, Tom examined the locker under the sailor's bunk and there discovered a black bottle nearly full of whiskey, and a glass.

Pouring some of this out he held it to the man's lips.

The smell of the liquor aroused the mariner, and he opened his eyes.

Then he opened his mouth and Tom let the stuff trickle down his throat.

It acted like magic on him.

He revived and his voice grew stronger.

"Thanks, my lad. I feel better; but I'm afraid I'm done for. Who are you and how came you here?"

"I'm an American, just arrived in Mexico yesterday. I and my companion here came down to the coast from San Ignacio to take a swim. We saw this stranded vessel and came aboard to look her over. Then we heard your cries for water and entered the cabin to see what was the matter. Now tell me, if you can, who you are and how came you to be bound hand and foot here and left to perish, apparently."

"My name is Bob Short. I've been livin' on the old hooker for some time. A Mexican rascal, named Mendez Pinto, discovered the object of my presence in this locality and had been tryin' for some time to get possession of the secret that I possess. I wouldn't tell him, in spite of the promises he made, for I distrusted him, feelin' certain he would do me up the moment he found out what he was after. A few days ago he visited me again and succeeded in druggin' me. When I came to I was flighty and fastened to the bunk, as you saw. Next day he came again and said that unless I told him the secret of the treasure buried on the island of Santa Cruz, I should lie here till I rotted. I refused to say a word, and he left me. But each day he has called again. It is only an hour since that he was here last. I begged him for water in my delirium. He laughed at and taunted me. He said I should not have a drop until I had told him what he wanted to know. If I told him he would only leave me to my fate, so I said nothing and he left in a violent rage. He will return again before long, I am sure, for he fears I will die with the secret untold. Give me some whiskey. I feel I am growing weaker once more."

Tom gave him another drink, which seemed to brace him up.

"Well, if he comes while we're here we'll kick him out," said Tom, resolutely.

"Perhaps; but you don't know what a treacherous dog he is. He has a knife and a revolver in his clothes. You would be no match for him. Still, I can help you to the means of standin' him off should he surprise you here. Look in the locker under me. You will find a pair of loaded revolvers. Take them, between you. You would do the world a favor if you shot the rascal."

Tom found the revolvers, and putting one in his pocket placed the other beside the sailor.

"You'll be able to defend yourself now," he said.

"No; I'll never be strong enough again to use it. Give it to your companion. He may need it to defend himself."

Tom, to humor him, handed it to Jim, who was seated on a box nearby.

"Oh, you'll come around all right, Mr. Short," said Tom,



encouragingly. "We'll see that you get on your pins again, and then we'll see if we can't make it hot for the Mexican."

"No. I'm booked for Davy Jones. I shan't live many hours. I feel it here. My insides are all gone like. That rascal has finished me; but it won't do him any good. No, no; he'll never learn my secret—the secret of a million in gold."

"A million in gold!" exclaimed Tom, wonderingly. "What do you mean?"

"Give me another drink and you shall know. You've been good to me and shall profit by the knowledge that the Greaser couldn't wring from me. It is a fortune, my lad, a great fortune. Think of it—a million dollars in Spanish gold."

"My gracious!" cried Tom, as he poured another dram down the sailor's throat.

"It's buried on the island of Santa Cruz. You know the island. It's across from this shore, a mile out in the gulf."

"You mean that small island yonder?" asked Tom, waving his arm waterward.

"Ay, ay, that's it. Now listen and I'll tell you how you can find it. But first send your companion to watch at the head of the companion-stairs. It would not do for that villain to come upon us unobserved. He's like a cat. If he heard voices down here he would creep in somehow and hide, and listen to all I told you. Then he'd know what I have tried to keep from him. He'd follow you to the place, and kill you for possession of the treasure. After you've learned the secret you must be cautious and not let him find out that you know it, or he'd contrive some way to force you into yielding up the knowledge. Beware of him as you would of a venomous reptile that crossed your path."

"Where does he live? Do you know?"

"On the island; so, remember, be cautious how you go there."

"Jim," said Tom, "go to the head of the companion-stairs and keep watch. Let me know at once if you see any one approaching this vessel."

Jim obediently obeyed, and Tom cautioned him to keep under cover as much as possible, so that Mendez Pinto might not become aware that there were visitors on the stranded schooner.

"I will go back to the beginnin'," said Bob Short, in a weak voice, "and tell you how I came to learn about this treasure. I am a sailor, as you have no doubt guessed, and have followed the sea since I was a boy. Last winter I was stranded in San Francisco. While huntin' for a berth in some coaster I ran foul of an old skipper I sailed with once, and he seemed mighty glad to see me. 'Bob,' he said, 'I want you to take a short trip with me.' 'I'll do it,' said I, right off the reel, for I was anxious to get a ship. 'This is somethin' out of the usual, Bob,' he said. 'I don't care what it is, cap'n,' I answered, 'count me in.' 'All right,' he said, and he up and told me that the destination of his schooner was the Gulf of California, and the object of the voyage was to discover a million in Spanish gold hidden more than a hundred years ago by a Spanish pirate named

Vasquez. 'Are you sure the money is there, cap'n?' I asked him. 'Sure as I'm a-sittin' here lookin' at you,' said he, in a positive way that showed he was dead in earnest. With that he pulled out a time-stained chart and showed it to me. 'That gives the full partic-lars,' he said. 'Any one could find it with that there chart.' 'A million is a lot of money, cap'n,' I said. 'A powerful lot,' he answered, solemnly. 'I suppose if you find the gold the rest of us will get a rake-off over and above their wages as an inducement to do their best?' I said. 'Sure,' said he. 'There'll only be four of us all told, includin' the cook. You and the other foremast hand are to get \$10,000 each, and the ducky \$5,000. Are you satisfied?' he asked. 'That suits me,' said I. 'I shan't know what to do with so much money when I get it.' 'Put it in a bank and live off it for the rest of your life,' said he, and I thought that good advice, and meant to profit by it. Well, we left 'Frisco on Christmas mornin' and sailed straight for this place. But we hadn't more than struck the Gulf before a storm caught us, sudden like, and before we knew where we were the schooner was ashore. When I came on deck from the cabin where the cap'n sent me for somethin', I forget what now, I found him dead, crushed by the fall of the mainmast, and the other man and ducky nowhere in sight. As they never turned up from that time to this, of course it's natural to suppose that they went overboard and were lost. Next day it cleared off, and then I realized that I was stranded on a foreign coast. I buried the cap'n in the sand near the point, but before I did so I took possession of all his effects, includin' the treasure chart. Then I made up my mind to try and get that million in gold myself, though how I was to carry it away after I found it puzzled me greatly. I couldn't go to the island to look for it without a boat, so I hunted around and bought an old sailin' boat from a Mexican fisherman, with some of the cap'n's money. Then I went to the island, and after a little while I located the treasure. I was gettin' ready to carry it off when that Mexican scoundrel, Mendez Pinto got wind of my game. He knew the treasure was hid somewhere on the island, and had been huntin' after it for years, as he afterward told me when he tried to get me to go in with him and divide up. That's why he's livin' there—him and a gal named Mercedes, whom he calls his niece. I'd have been glad to divvy with him only there was that in his eye which told me he was not to be trusted. I sized him up as a chap who would kill you as quick as winkin', if there was any object in it, and I guessed half a million, the share I was supposed to get, would have been object enough. At any rate we couldn't come to terms, and since then I've found it impossible to go near the place without him knowin' of it. At length he got impatient and started in to threaten me. I laughed at him, for I thought I had him on the hip. But I didn't know the cuss I was dealin' with, and this is the end of it."

The sailor did not tell all the foregoing as we have written it.

It took time, and many drinks from the bottle to keep him going.



There were many interruptions while he lay back and looked like a dead man.

But he finally got it all out.

"Here's the chart," he said, finally, hauling it out from under a slit in the mattress and placing it in Tom's hand. "I've made some marks on it myself, as you will see. The place is at the north end of the island, in a little cove. You won't have to make none of them measurements. I've done that myself and spotted the place. In fact I've seen the chest that holds the money. It's in a cave, the entrance of which is just below the low-water mark, and can't be seen at any time. But you'll see three trees on a bluff overlookin' the water. The chart will guide you to them, and then you won't need it any more, for all you'll have to do, if you can swim, is to dive at the rock directly under them trees and you'll find yourself in a marine cavern. Strike a light and the money-chest you'll see right before you, with its million in Spanish gold."

"There's a man comin' this way," said Jim, appearing at that moment.

"That's Pinto," said the sailor. "Hide, both of you, for your lives."

### CHAPTER XIII.

—MENDEZ PINTO.

"Douse the light before you go," said the sailor, "and try and keep within hail, for I don't know what the chap will do to me when he finds I'm loose, and I'd rather not be murdered in cold blood, for I'll die soon enough as it is."

Tom blew out the light, and he and Jim took up their stations, revolvers in hand, on the other side of the door leading into the hold.

They had hardly secreted themselves when they heard a light step on the planks overhead.

Presently the companionway was darkened by a man, and Mendez Pinto stepped down into the cabin.

He stopped and listened intently.

Bob Short remained as quiet as the grave.

"Perdition!" exclaimed the Mexican, in Spanish, "can the dog be dead? If so, I have cheated myself out of the prize I seek. I will see. This time he shall tell me what I wish to know, or——"

His voice ended in a hiss.

He approached the bunk and felt of the sailor.

"Warm—ah! He still breathes. Caramba! What is this? The ropes cut. What does this mean?"

He struck a match, looked for the lantern and lighted it.

"Ha! The glass is warm. Some one is here, and he extinguished the light when he heard me on deck."

He drew his revolver and flashed the light around the cabin.

"Not here, ha! Then he's hiding in the hold. Caramba! I will have him out in a moment. What is another life, more or less, to me with such a stake in sight? Nothing. You want the sheep, or the bullock, or the fowl, for your pleasure, and you kill. Suppose you want the life of a man who stands in your way? You kill him, too."

The sailor heard and understood the villain's words perfectly.

The boys heard him plainly enough also, but as he spoke in Spanish its significance was to a great extent lost on them.

His actions, however, showed that he believed that there was some one else besides the sailor and himself under the deck of the derelict, and the boys began to look for trouble.

Tom plucked Jim by the sleeve and started for the galley.

Jim accompanied him on tiptoe.

As soon as they were behind the bulkhead Tom struck a match and looked around for a hiding-place for himself and his companion.

There was a pile of dunnage forward of the gallery.

"Hide under this," said Tom, and they did.

They had hardly got under cover before Mendez Pinto appeared with the lantern in his hand.

He flashed the light around the galley, and seeing no sign of an intruder he began examining the space behind it.

In one hand he carried his revolver ready for action, and he looked very formidable indeed to the boys.

They kept very quiet in their hiding-place, and although Pinto looked the dunnage over, the light was not bright enough for him to discover their proximity.

He stood a moment as if puzzled and then returned to the cabin, muttering Spanish oaths under his breath.

He went out on deck and looked around the immediate vicinity, carefully, but all to no purpose.

He returned to the cabin in a bad humor, and, placing the lantern on the table, turned to Bob Short.

By that time Tom and Jim had returned to the shadow of the doorway looking into the cabin, and were watching for developments.

"So, Senor Short," said the Mexican, in English, "you have had a visitor, eh? Caramba! Had I caught sight of him there would have been something to feed the fishes with. You do not feel so bad as when last I was here. This visitor not only cut you loose, but gave you something to drink."

The rascal smelt of the whiskey bottle, then poured out a portion in the tumbler and drank it.

"Well, are you tired of this? Shall we come to terms? It is as you say whether you go to the island with me and dine on the, what you call, fat of the land, or—is it necessary that I go to the trouble of expressing myself clearer? You gringos are stupid. Of what use is it that you hold out, eh? What you gain by it? You are now the picture of a dead man, and all because you thought to get the better of me. Caramba! I am like an old fox. It is not so easy to get the better of me. Suppose you refuse to tell me where the treasure is hidden, what then? • You die and I search on as I have done these five years past till I find it. I am not so old but I have many years before me to examine every rock and bush on the island. It is but a question of time before I find that million, and then it will all be mine. Think well, senor, is it worth while that you die to cheat



me out of half of that million and yourself out of the other half? I promise you a good boat, and will help you load your share on her, if you agree to point out where the treasure lies. Is not that fair enough? Your life and half a million of gold money are at your disposal. Are you mad that you throw both to the winds? Come, I am impatient for your answer."

"My answer is the same. I do not trust you. You would not keep faith with me."

"I swear by all the saints——"

"It is too late. I am as good as a dead man. An hour or two and all the gold in the world will be nothin' to me. The secret dies with me. You may hunt yourself till you're white-headed, but you will not find that million. Never, Mendez Pinto."

"Caramba! You laugh at me!" cried the Mexican, furiously. "You are not as yet dead. Perhaps I find a way to open your lips. You are in my power, Senor Short. I can do with you as I choose. Perhaps you have never heard how Cortez, who conquered this country, treated the Aztec chiefs who would not reveal the hiding-places of the Montezuma treasure. Shall I tell you one ordeal they underwent? Their feet were tied over a brazier of live coals. What think you if I try that on you, eh? You can feel pain, Senor Short, is it not so? Well, I shall go now to the galley to prepare the torture. When I return, if you do not speak you shall taste of the torments of the infernal regions, and I shall laugh at your screams, and mock your agony. You see, senor, there are more ways than one of killing a cat."

The rascal rose from the box he had used as a seat, with a sardonic smile on his lips, and moved forward the entrance of the hold.

The boys retreated to their former hiding-place.

Tom saw, however, that they would presently have to interfere between the vindictive Mexican and his intended victim.

He would protect the sailor from Pinto's malignancy at all hazards.

The Mexican lighted a fire in the stove, placed an iron pan over the blaze.

There wasn't the least doubt but he was thoroughly in earnest with respect to his fiendish intentions.

He believed by this crafty and diabolical method he could extract the secret from the dying man's lips.

The boys watched him heat and finally test the temperature of the pan with a piece of paper.

At length he took it off the fire and returned to the cabin, followed, cautiously, by the boys.

"Now, Senor Short, you shall have a taste of the tortures of the Inquisition if you do not at once tell me where that treasure is buried. Come, open your mouth, or, Caramba! the torture will open it in a way you shall not fancy."

Bob Short was dying fast.

He cast a sort of terrified look at the Mexican, who had removed the helpless man's shoe and woolen stocking, and

now stood with the iron pan in his right hand, significantly inclined downward.

"For heaven sake, let me die in peace!" gasped Short, rolling his eyes around the cabin as if in search of help from the boy to whom he had confided his secret.

"Ha! I have touched you at last, eh?" grinned the Mexican. "The secret—pronto! Then I leave you to die as you choose."

"No, no—you shall never know it—never, Mendez Pinto!"

"We shall see!" cried the Mexican, with compressed lips, turning the pan lower so as to begin the torture.

"Stop!" cried Tom Danvers, stepping into the cabin. "This business has gone far enough, Mendez Pinto."

"Ave Maria!" ejaculated the Mexican, dimly making out the figure of the resolute boy by the uncertain light of the lantern, which stood on the table. "Who are you?"

"It's none of your business who I am," replied Tom. "Put down that pan or I'll shoot you as you stand there."

"Ha! You are an Americano—a dog of a gringo! You dare talk to me, Mendez Pinto, in that tone! Caramba! I will have your life!" cried the Mexican, furiously.

He raised the pan as if to hurl it at the boy, when Tom pulled the trigger.

A sharp report followed.

With a cry, Pinto dropped the pan, clapped his hand to his head, reeled and fell to the floor, where he lay quite still.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CURTAIN FALLS ON BOB SHORT.

Tom sprang forward, with the smoking revolver in his hand, and looked down at the unconscious Mexican.

The boy had intended to hit him in the arm, but not being an expert shot the weapon had jerked up and the ball had cut a slight furrow in Pinto's head.

The rascal had had a narrow escape from death, and Tom was much relieved to find that he had not killed him, for it is a solemn thing to take the life of any man, even though he be a villain of the deepest dye.

"Have you killed him?" fluttered Bob Short.

"No; and I'm glad of it," replied Tom, with a sigh of relief. "I wouldn't want his death on my soul."

"It would have been better for you and your chances of recovering the treasure had you settled him for good," said the sailor, faintly. "He has no doubt recognized you, and will never rest until he gets back at you. He is a treacherous scoundrel, capable, as you have just seen, of any malignant action. Be on your guard against him, or you'll never leave this country alive."

"What ought I to do with him?" asked Tom.

"Tie him hand and foot and take away his weapons. You can release him after I am dead."

"Do you mean to say that you really expect to die, Mr. Short?" asked Tom, shocked at the idea.

"I haven't an hour's life in me. I can feel the hand of death at my heart at this moment. I can't escape my fate, so what's the use of kickin'?"



"I'll send Jim to San Ignacio for a doctor," said Tom. "Maybe he'll be able to save you."

"It is useless. I'll be gone before he could get back. Give me a drink of the whiskey, for I feel deathly faint. Then attend to that rascal."

Tom gave him a drink, and it brightened him up a bit, but not near so much as it had previously done.

Even the boy saw now that the signs of dissolution were near at hand, and that no earthly power could save the sailor.

"And it's all your fault," mused Tom, bitterly, regarding the unconscious Mexican with small favor. "After all, I don't know whether I'd be sorry or not if I had killed you."

He motioned to Jim to bring the pieces of line which had lately secured Bob Short to the bunk, and then called on him to assist in making a prisoner of Pinto.

Then they carried him into the hold and left him to recover his senses as best he might.

Bob Short lingered an hour and then died like the puffing out of a candle.

Tom then took the lantern and went into the hold to take a look at the Mexican.

He was still insensible.

"I wonder when he'll come to?" the boy asked himself. "The doctor ought to be back from the mine by this time. I guess I'd better bring him over here to attend to this rascal. That bullet may have given him concussion of the brain. I'll have to bring the wagon over anyway to carry the sailor's body to San Ignacio for burial. Yes, I guess the doctor had better see this fellow."

Tom decided to cut Pinto loose, and did so.

Then he and Jim started for the town.

Tom decided to say nothing about the treasure hidden on the island of Santa Cruz to the doctor.

He meant, however, to take his brother into his confidence and with his help and Jim's set about recovering the million in gold.

If they were successful in getting it into their possession he would hand over a large slice of it to Jack, and hold probably \$50,000 in trust for Jim, whom he had got to like very much indeed.

Then they would charter a vessel of some kind to take them to San Francisco, whence they would proceed East by rail.

He calculated that his brother would be able to square himself somehow at the village by making a liberal donation to the place, and he hoped that in time he might be able to fully establish his innocence.

As for himself, it would be a simple matter to submit to arrest and then pay the small fine that he would be assessed.

Then he would build a fine house for his mother to live in, and perhaps some day in the future Jennie Dean would become his wife and its mistress.

These were the dreams he indulged in as he and Jim walked silently back to San Ignacio.

They found the doctor and Jack waiting in the wagon for them to show up.

"Where have you boys been?" asked Dr. Quackenbush. "We've been holding dinner back half an hour for you."

"Oh, we've been down to the shore taking a bath, for one thing, and up against a pretty strenuous experience, for another," replied Tom.

"You don't say," replied the doctor. "Sit up to the table. You both look hungry. After you've filled up you can tell your story."

All hands showed that they possessed excellent appetites, for they cleaned up about everything in sight.

"Jim can wash up the dishes while you tell us about this stirring adventure that you hinted at," said the doctor, after they had finished the meal.

The proprietor of the Kickapoo Remedy got out one of his cigars, Jack produced his pipe, and then Tom began his story.

He related everything just as it happened to Jim and himself, but he said nothing at all about the treasure on the island.

Jack and the doctor were greatly astonished, and the latter agreed to go down to the wreck, in the wagon, and give the Mexican the benefit of his services.

Accordingly, Tom and Jim hitched the horses to the wagon and the former drove the vehicle to the shore.

"There's the old derelict, yonder," he pointed to the doctor.

"Hard and fast ashore in the sand, isn't it?" was the reply.

"Yes, she's sailed her last trip on the briny," laughed Tom.

He guided the wagon close alongside of the wreck and, with his brother and Dr. Quackenbush, stepped on her deck.

The lantern was still burning on the table in the cabin, and the face of the dead sailor looked calm and peaceful.

"Poor fellow, he's gone to his final account," remarked the doctor. "We'll take him with us to the town, presently."

Then, taking the lantern in his hand, Tom led the way into the hold to the spot where he had left Mendez Pinto.

The Mexican, however, was not there.

"He's gone," said Tom, in some surprise.

"Recovered his senses of his own accord," replied the doctor. "The wound couldn't have been a serious one. The ball probably only stunned him, though from your description I judge that he had a narrow shave of it."

"I guess he did," replied Tom. "I didn't aim at his head; but, then, I'm no great shot. The revolver kicked and the ball was deflected upward."

"Well, my professional services will not be called into requisition, I see. So let's attend to the dead sailor now," said the doctor.

The body of Bob Short was wrapped in a blanket and carried to the wagon.

Then they drove back to San Ignacio.

As the wagon receded from the wreck a head, bound up



in a blood-stained rag, appeared above the companionway and glared after them.

It was Mendez Pinto who had recovered his senses a little while before the vehicle drove up, and seeing that he could not leave the derelict without being observed had concealed himself behind the galley until the party left.

"So, young senor, I have your face well booked in my memory," he gritted, with a look that augured ill for Tom Danvers. "You balked me at the moment of success. It will be my turn soon to pay you back, with interest, the debt I owe you. You shall regret the hour you interfered with Mendez Pinto. I will make you dance to the tune of the dead march."

He shook his fist after the departing vehicle, and when it had vanished around a bend in the road he emerged entirely from the companion-ladder, stepped on to the beach and walked up the shore to a point where a trim little sailboat was moored, by her painter, to a rock.

Boarding her, he cast off, raised the sail, and laid his course for the island of Santa Cruz.

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN THE HANDS OF MENDEZ PINTO.

After supper that evening Tom took his brother off for a walk.

"This is a curious old town, isn't it?" said Jack, after they had proceeded a short distance.

"Yes, but it's not half so curious as the story I'm going to tell you," replied Tom.

"What story is that?" asked Jack, curiously.

"The story that the dead sailor told me."

"So he told you a story, did he? What was it about?"

"A hidden treasure."

"A hidden treasure!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"Exactly. A million dollars in Spanish gold."

"Go on, Tom. What are you giving me?"

"Nothing but the truth. Listen."

Then Tom told his brother all that Bob Short had narrated to him about the pirate treasure concealed in a marine cavern on the island of Santa Cruz, a mile out in the gulf.

"Do you believe there's anything in it?" asked Jack, in some excitement.

"I do. I've got the chart in my pocket which I'll show you in the morning. I want you and Jim to help me recover this gold, and I promise to give you a good slice of it for yourself."

"I'm with you, Tom. It would set us both up for life if we found that amount of money. Have you said anything to the doctor about it?"

"Not a thing. He's all right, the Doc, but I see no reason letting him in on this. He's got a good bunch of money already, and will probably make a lot more out of this silver mine which he's decided to buy into, while you and I have nothing. We'll take the sailor's boat to-morrow, which lies down by the wreck, sail over to the north end of the island, with Jim, and dive for that cave. But we've

got to keep our eyes skinned for that Mexican, Mendez Pinto. He's shown that he won't stop at murder even to get a line on that treasure. You can take that revolver and knife I took away from him after I shot him. Jim and I have the two guns the sailor gave me. With that armament we ought to be able to stand Pinto off."

"We'll stand him off all right," replied Jack, confidently. "If I clap my eyes on a million in gold to be had for the mere carrying off, you can bet I'm ready to put up a mighty good fight to keep anybody else's hands off it."

In the morning, Tom showed his brother the chart, and they studied it over together.

"Bob Short has simplified matters for us, for he's found the marine cavern, and all that remains for us to do is to locate those three trees. He's marked them down here," and Tom put his finger on the chart. "When we find them we've only to dive down under the rock at that point, and according to the sailor we'll come up inside the cavern with the chest of gold right before us. You'd better keep the chart, Jack, as you've got an inside pocket to your vest and I haven't got a vest at all."

An hour later, after the doctor had gone back to the silver mine, Jack, Tom and Jim went to the shore and found the battered sailboat in the same place it had been since Bob Short last used it.

Jack knew something about handling a boat, so under his directions the sail was hoisted and they started for the north end of the island.

As a matter of precaution against Mendez Pinto's watchful eyes, they did not aim directly for Santa Cruz island at first, but approached the north shore by a roundabout course.

Finally they got close in and sailed along, watching the chart closely and keeping a bright lookout for the three trees.

"There they are!" cried Jim, whose eyes were uncommonly sharp ones.

"Eureka!" cried Tom, feeling like pitching his hat into the air.

"Will you make the first dive, Tom? You're the best swimmer in the bunch."

"Sure I will," and he started to undress.

"You'll need a light, Tom, if you come up in the cavern," said Jack. "How are you going to manage about it?"

"I'll wrap half a dozen matches in a piece of my handkerchief and carry them in my mouth."

In a few minutes he was ready to make the dive, and providing himself with the matches he sprang overboard and disappeared beneath the surface.

He came up, as he expected, in the midst of dense darkness, and after swimming a stroke or two felt bottom under him.

Walking forward, up an inclined surface, and feeling around with his hands he emerged altogether from the water and came against a hard surface, which proved to be the bare rock.

Tom struck one of the matches against it, and when the



light flared up he found himself in the cavern, and right before him stood a good-sized, iron-bound chest.

The top was staved in and a small hatchet lay upon it.

Evidently this was Bob Short's work, for he had declared to Tom that he had seen the gold.

With a palpitating heart, the boy bent over the chest and struck a second match.

The glare of the flame revealed, through the gaping hole made by the hatchet, the yellowish hue of the precious metal shining up from an opened bag.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom, in ecstasy. "The gold is here, and it is all ours for the taking."

After he had recovered his self-possession a bit he examined the treasure as well as he could with the remaining matches.

He saw what seemed to be a jewel-box in one corner of the chest, and by the aid of his last match he pulled it out.

"I'll see if I can carry this back with me as an evidence that I saw the treasure," he said to himself.

Then he walked down the incline into the water, with the box in his hand.

As soon as the water was up to his chin he plunged forward and struck out with one arm.

He arose to the light of day, and saw the sailboat a few yards away and close to a patch of beach.

He swam toward it and soon felt the ground under his feet.

"I've found it! I've found it!" he shouted to his brother, and held up the box, triumphantly.

Jack jumped ashore and met Tom as he came out of the water.

"What have you there?" asked Jack.

"It's a handsomely inlaid box full of something—jewels perhaps," replied Tom. "I picked it out of the chest, the cover of which is smashed in. It's simply full of bags of gold coin, the chest is. I guess there's a million there all right."

Jack made no reply, for he was busily engaged examining the box, which was inlaid with gold and mother of pearl—a very handsome and artistic piece of work.

"Chuck me my clothes, Jim," said Tom.

Jim threw them on the beach and Tom dressed himself.

"We'll have to smash this to open it," said Jack, "and it would be a shame to do that, for it's worth money as it stands."

"Why should we smash it?" answered Tom. "We need not be in a hurry to open it. I'll bet it's full of rare jewels. We'll wait till we get to 'Frisco, and get a locksmith to open it properly. Well, do you want to take a dive in there yourself?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then peel off and work the boat around to the rock. Take some matches in your mouth, like I did. You'll find them handy. I'll stay here till you get back. Then we'll figure on how to get the gold out of the cavern."

Jack decided to undress in the boat.

As soon as he had disrobed he worked the boat into the proper place, made the dive and did not come up again.

"He's in there all right," thought Tom, as the boat floated back to the patch of beach, under the action of the tide. "This is a fine box, bet your life. I'll make a present of it to——"

He was interrupted by a warning cry from Jim.

Tom started to his feet and looked toward the boat.

"Run—jump into the water!" shouted Jim, frantically.

Before Tom could comprehend the situation a man sprang from the top of the low bluff behind him and seized him around the chest with both arms.

"Caramba!" exclaimed a triumphant voice in his ear.

"I have you, senor Americano. Now I fix you for keeps!"

Then it was Tom realized that he was at the mercy of Mendez Pinto.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A CLOSE CALL—THE TREASURE OF SANTA CRUZ.

Jim drew his revolver, but didn't dare shoot on account of the chance of hitting Tom in place of Pinto.

The result was soon placed beyond doubt by the appearance of several men on the bluff, who were evidently connected with the Mexican.

Pinto shouted to them to come to his assistance, for Tom was making matters interesting for him at that moment.

They sprang down and relieved the Mexican of the boy, making him a helpless prisoner, while Pinto, with a cry of satisfaction, snatched the box from the lad's hand.

At Pinto's orders, they bore Tom back up the bluff, the Mexican following, and Jim soon lost sight of the party altogether.

When Jack returned from the marine cavern Jim told him the startling news of Tom's capture by the Mexican.

"We must rescue him," said Jack, resolutely.

"I'll help you do it," said Jim, with a dogged expression on his face, for he was ready to go through fire and smoke for Tom's sake.

Jack hurriedly dressed himself.

"That rascal lives at the south end of the island, so Tom told me, and I'll bet he's taken my brother down there. We'll just sail around and make the fur fly, in spite of him and all the men he can raise."

There wasn't the least doubt but that Jack Danvers meant business, and Jim, inoffensive as he looked, meant business, too.

The sail was raised again and the boat's head turned in a direction that would fetch them around to the southern end of the island.

In the meantime, Tom was hurried along southward by his captors, Mendez Pinto following in the rear with the box, which he judged must be a part of the treasure, carefully tucked under his arm.

He knew now that the treasure in question must be somewhere very near the spot where he had captured the boy, and after he had wreaked a satisfactory revenge on



the young American, he intended to return and hunt for it.

A half an hour's rapid tramp brought them to the other end of the island.

Here Tom saw a two-story, white adobe house standing on a gentle elevation near the shore, and backed by a grove of tall, tropical trees.

A handsome-looking girl, with an olive complexion, was standing at the door, and this, Tom guessed, must be Pinto's niece, Mercedes.

About a hundred feet from the beach was a stout pole sticking up out of the water.

The tide was low at the time, but it was coming in fast.

"Now, *senor Americano*, it is my turn," hissed the Mexican, as the party paused within earshot of the girl in the doorway. "Yesterday you did what your gringos shall call the butt-in. You spoiled my little game with the *Senor Short*, and besides you put a ball so near my scalp that a shade more and it had been all up with me for keeps. Well, the tables are what you call turned. To-day it is I who am on top. You are now in my power. Suppose I kill you, what then? Nothing. You will be gone. Your life is forfeit to me, and I will do with it as I please. At present it is my purpose to do you up. Still it is just possible, *senor Americano*, that you can buy yourself off. Is it the fact that *Senor Short* has told you where the treasure of Santa Cruz is hid? This jewel box, which you were looking at when I caught you, tells me that you got the secret from the sailor. Is it so?"

Tom made no answer.

"Come, young *senor*, I will make a bargain with you. It is your life for the secret. Is it not worth your while to come to my terms? *Senor Short* proved himself a fool, for he lost both his life and the treasure as well, when he might have saved the one and half of the other. Is it not well that you take warning by him? What say you? Is it a bargain between us?"

"No, it isn't," blurted out Tom. "I wouldn't tell you a word if I died for it."

"Say you so, young *senor*? It is a pity I have not a lead bath ready that I bring you to your senses. However, I have that at hand which will, perhaps, answer as well. Mark you the tide is coming in? It will soon be two feet higher, enough to cover you to the eyes if you were bound out to yonder pole which you see there in the water. How think you it would feel to have the water rise slowly, inch by inch, till it covered your mouth, eh? Then above that till it touched the tip of your nose? You would throw back your head to catch a whiff of air to breathe, would you not? And what then? The water would cut you short. You would gasp, and it would strangle you, like you had a rope pressing tightly around your neck. How does the prospect please you? Will you try that, or shall I have the secret of the Treasure of Santa Cruz from you? It is what you call up to you, *senor Americano*," said Pinto, with a fiendish grin.

"You can kill me if you mean to, Mendez Pinto, but as

Bob Short stood you off so will I. I refuse to deal with you."

"Ho! You speak brave words, young *senor*, let us see if you practice as well as preach. Here, Hernandez and Gonzalez, take this boy and bind him tightly to yon pole. See that his feet touch bottom, and that he is not able to work upward. Understand?"

The two men seized Tom and hurriedly bore him into the water.

The girl, Mercedes, who has been listening intently to the words of Pinto, now rushed forward and threw herself on her knees before him.

"Mercy—mercy, Mendez! Do not kill the boy!" she cried, supplicatingly, in Spanish.

He cast her from him impatiently.

But she would not be put off, and once more she implored him not to injure his young prisoner.

"Caramba!" he cried, furiously, in Spanish. "You would balk me, too, Mercedes! You shall pay for this. It is not the first time you have tried to cross me. You are taken with the young man's face, I believe. Well, you shall come with me, then, and see how he likes his water bath. It will please you perhaps to watch him drown."

He caught the struggling girl around the waist and bound her arms behind her, dragged her to a boat and pushed off with her toward the pole, where Tom was now secured, hand and foot, chest deep in the water.

Pinto worked the boat within a foot or so of Danvers.

"Ha, *senor Americano*! Shall the bargain be made between us, or will you drown, like a rat in a trap?" he cried, maliciously.

Tom returned him a defiant look.

He knew that Pinto was a treacherous villain, and that even were he to disclose the secret of the treasure it would not avail to save his life.

If he had to die he would die like a man and not make a useless bid for his life.

"You are stubborn still, eh? You gringos are all alike—all stupid fools. Well, you at least shall have a taste of death by degrees. See the water has already risen to your armpits. Soon it will cover your shoulders. Then your neck. Ah, you will feel it creeping up to your mouth. Por dios! I will wait here and see you drown. It will be to me a salve for my sore head."

Presently a thought came in his mind.

He took a strong knife from his belt and inserting it along the cover of the inlaid box succeeded by skillful manœuvering in prying the cover open.

The sunlight flashed from a collection of costly diamond ornaments with which the box was filled.

Pinto's eyes devoured the gems with an avaricious gleam. He saw at once that they were immensely valuable.

Then he looked maliciously at the boy before him.

"Will the young *senor* take his last look at the sparklers?" grinned the Mexican, holding the jewel-box tantalizingly toward Tom.



Bound firmly to the post, the fast-rising tide laving his shoulders, the boy met Mercedes's despairing gaze.

So interested was Mendez Pinto and his myrmidons that they did not notice the appearance of a sailboat around the corner of the point until it was practically on them, then one of the men uttered a cry of warning.

"Compadre!" shouted Pinto, furiously. "Head the boat off!"

Mercedes now began to work at her bonds, and as the rope was insecurely tied she got free of it.

To stop the boat, however, was more than they dared attempt, for Jack Danvers stood at the helm with his drawn revolver, ready for business, and Jim, in the bows, was equally prepared for action.

Seeing how things looked, the Mexican drew his knife again and started to make a lunge with it at Tom's defenseless neck.

Mercedes, perceiving his intention, seized him by the arm, and in the struggle the knife fell to the bottom of the boat.

As Pinto turned furiously on the girl and seized her by the throat, Jim fired at him, point-blank.

The bullet penetrated his back and passed through his heart.

With a dying scream, he threw up his hands, pitched headfirst into the water, and did not reappear.

Mercedes snatched up the knife, leaned down and severed the ropes that bound Tom's chest to the pole.

Then she sprang overboard and sank beneath the surface.

In less than half a minute Tom was free and clinging, with the girl, to the boat.

"You have saved my life, Mercedes," he said, gratefully.

She smiled, but made no answer.

Then the sailboat came up and Tom was taken on board.

Mercedes refused any assistance, and, despite her clothes, swam gracefully to the shore, landed, and ran into the house.

"Wait a moment, Jack," said Tom. "That box of jewels is in that rowboat. We must get it."

It lay where it had fallen from Pinto's hands, and was recovered by Tom, after which the boat filled away from the island.

They decided to do nothing further with regard to the treasure until next day, for they had to secure means to get the gold from the cavern.

Next morning, having provided themselves with candles, a covered basket and a long rope, they visited the site of the marine cavern and by degrees got out all the treasure in the chest, which pretty well filled the sailboat.

They carried it to the wreck and there found boxes enough to accommodate every bag.

With some of the gold they chartered a small schooner to take them and their newly found property to San Francisco.

They arrived in San Francisco without mishap, and there Tom turned the Spanish gold over to the sub-treasury and received an order on New York for a million dollars.

The jewels were appraised at nearly half a million more,

and Tom had to pay a duty on them, amounting to \$125,000, which was deducted from his order on the New York sub-treasury.

The boys went straight to New York, where they put up at the Astor House.

Tom collected \$850,000 from the Government.

He gave his brother \$300,000, promised Jim \$50,000 when he got older, and retained \$500,000 and the jewels, worth as much more, himself.

Leaving Jack in New York for the present, he and Jim set out for Cobalt, where they duly arrived, and Tom was joyfully welcomed by his mother and the Deans.

As soon as possible he presented himself before the justice, and said he was prepared to pay whatever fine that gentleman thought fit to impose on him for striking Mr. John Gilpin.

He was let off for \$10.

Tom then learned that his brother's character had been re-established by the capture and confession of the man who had robbed Squire Penrose.

He at once telegraphed Jack the facts, and his brother came home right away.

In a month there was a wedding at the Dean's home, when Agnes Dean became the wife of the young man she had stuck by in his adversity.

Tom's air castles all came true.

He built a fine house on a hundred-acre farm that he purchased, adjoining a similar plot of ground secured by his brother, and there his mother went to live.

A few years later Jennie Dean also took up her permanent home there as Mrs. Tom Danvers, and the young couple are the happiest and most prosperous pair in all the county.

Jim lives with them, for nothing can persuade him to live anywhere else.

He is still going to school to make up for his early lack of opportunities, and no one who knew him as the companion of Dan Mullins would recognize him now.

On a long winter's evening his greatest delight is to sit around the blazing fire, with Tom and Jennie, and talk about how he, Tom and Jack, got possession of the Treasure of Santa Cruz—A MILLION IN GOLD.

THE END.

Read "BOUND TO MAKE MONEY; OR, FROM THE WEST TO WALL STREET," which will be the next number (88) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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